Ideology & Our Daily Bread

Chronicles of Culture

Volume 7, Number 5 May 1983 $1.50

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contents

4 Comment — Clyde Wilson

Opinions & Views

6 Literature & Ur-Reality — Gary S. Vasilash
—George Konrád: *The Loser*
—Milan Kundera: *The Joke*

8 Smoke Gets in Their Eyes — Lee Congdon
—William L. O'Neill: *A Better World*
—Irving Howe: *A Margin of Hope*

10 Fanciful Farming and Hindu Economics — Bryce Christensen
—Loretta Schwartz-Nobel: *Starving in the Shadow of Plenty*
—Albert O. Hirschman: *Shifting Involvements*

12 The Historical Tricycle — Daniel J. O'Neil
—*The Village Voice Anthology*; Edited by Geoffrey Stokes
—David Harris: *Dreams Die Hard*

14 A Feminist & a Flaneur — Betsy Clarke
—Margaret Atwood: *Dancing Girls*
—Margaret Atwood: *True Stories*
—Robert Walser: *Selected Stories*

17 School Daze — John C. Caiazza
—Rockne M. McCarthy, James W. Skillen, William A. Harper: *Disestablishment a Second Time*
—James S. Coleman, Thomas Hoffer, Sally Kilgore: *High School Achievement*

20 Coordinates Through the Void — Curtis K. Stadtfeld
—Elias Canetti: *The Torch in My Ear*
—Andrei Amalrik: *Notes of a Revolutionary*

22 The Public Purse — Gavin D. Arbuckle
—Yale Brozen: *Concentration, Mergers, and Public Policy*
—Joel Seligman: *The Transformation of Wall Street*

24 The Poetic Practice — Thomas H. Landess
—John Haffenden: *The Life of John Berryman*
—*Working Papers*; Edited by Judith Weissman

26 Food for Memory — Will Morrisey
—Richard Brautigan: *So the Wind Won't Blow It All Away*
—Richard Sennett: *The Frog Who Dared to Croak*

29 Bricks, Mortar & Touchstones — David R. Sands
—Amitai Etzioni: *An Immodest Agenda*

Commendables

31 Building a Better Fingernail File: *A Short History of Twentieth-Century Technology c. 1900-c. 1950*

In Focus

31 The Counseling Racket: *Good Advice, Having It All*

Waste of Money

32 Tin Soldiers — Mark G. Michaelsen
—William Wharton: *A Midnight Clear*

33 Having It Neither Way — Allen Brodsky
—Irwin Shaw: *Acceptable Losses*

Nonsense for Nonsexists: *Stories for Free Children*

Screen

34 Semipseudo Cinema Verité and Benighted Viewers — Stephen Macaulay
—William Rothman: *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze*
—Donald Crafton: *Before Mickey*

Stage

36 Tennessee Williams, RIP

Music

37 Madder Music

Journalism

38 A Boil
Schlock Fair

39 Liars
Unequal Logic

The American Proscenium

40 El Salvador

41 Arthur Koestler, RIP

42 An Epitaph to Rabidity—Copycats

Liberal Culture/11, 23, 27, 28, 30

Vol. 7, No. 4 April 1983

Religion, Psychology & the Modern Soul

Molnar: Comment; Hitchcock and Tyrmand on Nisbet *(Prejudices)*; Vasilash on Bruss, Barthes, and Sontag *(Beautiful Theories, A Barthes Reader, Empire of Signs, A Susan Sontag Reader)*; O'Neil on Hecht and Cannon *(Odd Destiny, Reagan)*; Tanner on Llosa, Bombal, and Puig *(Aunt Julia and the Scripturiter, New Islands and Other Stories, Eternal Curse on the Reader of These Pages)*; Carlson on Postman and Adler *(The Disappearance of Childhood, The Paideia Proposal)*; Christensen on Barzun and Johnson *(Critical Questions, Terrorists & Novelists)*; Steensma on Greene and Malamud *(Monsignor Quixote, God's Grace)*; Browning on Schaeffer and Anderson and Gribbin *(A Time for Anger, The Wealth of Families)*; Clemens on Meyer and Chavkin *(Israel Now, The Murder of Chile)*; Wolfe on Millgate, Delbanco, and Meyers *(Thomas Hardy, Group Portrait, The Enemy)*; Commendables; In Focus; Waste of Money; Screen; Art; Music; The American Proscenium; Journalism; Liberal Culture. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chronicles of Culture

Vol. 7, No. 5 May 1983

Ideology & Our Daily Bread

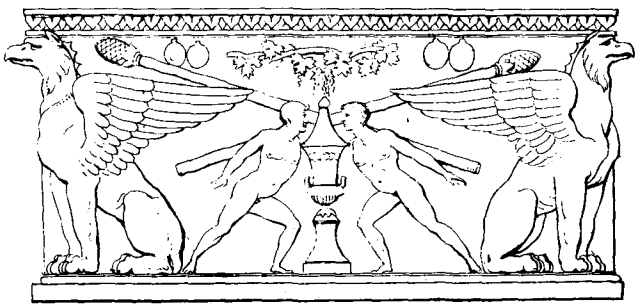
Chronicles of Culture (ISSN 0163-1187) is published monthly by The Rockford Institute; President: John Howard. Editorial and business offices: 934 North Main Street, Rockford, Illinois 61103. Phone: (815) 964-5054. Editor: Leopold Tyrmand; Associate Editor: Gary S. Vasilash; Managing Editor: Rebecca Woosley; Editorial Intern: Bryce Christensen; Editorial Secretary: Julie Maloyan; Publisher: Richard A. Vaughan; Production Coordinator: Lindy Ellingwood; Subscription Manager: Anita Fedora. Printed by Wilson-Hall Co. Technical Services: Marge Wollschlager Composition. Subscriptions: $18.00 one year.

Cover: "La Parabola Dei Vignaioli," school of Andrea Del Sarto, from the MacLeish Collection, The Rare Print Cabinet, Rockford College Library. Original vignette by Warren Chappell. Graphic materials within the text from *Costumes of the Greeks and Romans* by Thomas Hope (Dover Publications, 1962). Copyright © 1983 by The Rockford Institute. All rights reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENT

When William Faulkner addressed the Delta Council, an organization of farmers, at Cleveland, Mississippi in 1952, he spoke about the Declaration of Independence.* The noble American postulate of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, Faulkner observed, seemed to have devolved into little more than a shorthand for material security. His insight was confirmed a few years later when President Eisenhower confessed to being unable to counter Khrushchev's argument that capitalism appealed only to man's baser nature while communism was a spiritual philosophy.



Americans once knew, said Faulkner, what the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness meant, because most men had been without it. Historically, that right was identified with strenuous efforts, not with material abundance. The men who made the hard and often fatal ocean voyages to found new colonies, who challenged the world's greatest power for their independence, who repeatedly penetrated the wilderness, were not seeking comfort. To pursue happiness did not mean an easy sinking into an anonymous hedonistic mass; it meant taking an active responsibility. "Which was exactly what we did, in those old days."

Our Founding Fathers did not glory chiefly in the fact that we were a prosperous people (though they did find that a source of satisfaction) but in the fact that we were a virtuous people. And "virtue" did not mean a mere puritanical avoidance of minor vices or that commercially circumspect behavior designed "to win friends and influence people." Virtue had a stern Roman connotation. It was a striving for republican ethics and personal honor. Men were not virtuous because they enjoyed the boon of self-government. Rather, they enjoyed the boon of self-government because they were virtuous enough to earn and to keep it.

Americans "did not mean," said Faulkner, "just to chase happiness, but to work for it." And by happiness they meant "not just pleasure, idleness, but peace, dignity, independence and self-respect; that man's inalienable right was, the peace and freedom in which, by his own efforts and sweat, he could gain dignity and independence, owing nothing to any man." Faulkner's words must be seen primarily in light of the biblical injunction about the necessity to labor for our daily bread, an assumption that implies a transcendent dimension in labor. Faulkner also knew that "inalienable right" was a term used in a political context. Man's happiness was not pursued atomistically, but within a civil community. The pursuit of happiness could not properly be read to mean putting consumption before labor or pleasure before obligation. Nor could it validate the distortions of sophists who, beginning in the 19th century, took the dependent clause about equality as the main point, as a jeremiad. Equality was merely the condition appertaining to the individual struggle for freedom and dignity, not a program to be implemented or a guarantee of results.

Faulkner was attempting to reemphasize the sacramental aspect of man's work and liberty, to free them from the materialist and utilitarian aura they had taken on. Man must live by bread, but he does not live by bread alone. The sane man, as Faulkner more than once illustrated in his fiction by contrary example, does not work to pile up riches. He works for the welfare of those of his blood and name—including the generations to come—and for his own dignity as a member of the community. His work and the liberty that makes it possible are not to be seen chiefly as a utilitarian search for maximum profit. Neither democracy nor economic productivity are satisfactory without the spiritual striving that Faulkner was pointing to. He knew, of course, that man would usually fall short of spiritual goals oftener than he would attain them.

Though he was probably not conscious of it, Faulkner was following a theme common in 19th-century Southern political literature. American democracy depended not so much upon its pragmatic methodology of the greatest good for the greatest number as upon its chivalric inheritance of striving for a code of conduct worthy of republicanism. The consent of the governed, Calhoun repeatedly warned in his fruitless attempts to clarify the concept of majority rule, was not a mere counting up of heads with the pie to be divided among the party with the largest numbers. It was a condition of intangible spiritual assent to the higher purposes of a commonwealth, an assent which required restraint and magnanimity on all sides.

Faulkner called upon his audience to remember not just the pragmatic and productive side of their liberty and labor but the chivalric and spiritual side. It is the linking of honor, courage, and loyalty to the earning of our daily bread that gives us whatever dignity we achieve. It is this that tells the plowman that he is not merely scratching in the earth but making it fruitful according to divine injunction; that tells the entrepreneur that he is not just making a quick buck but creating something useful; that tells the writer he is not only satisfying his vanity but communicating something of value to his fellow man.

*William Faulkner, *Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters*, ed. James B. Merriwether (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 126-134.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Faulkner was not optimistic. "We knew it once, had it once.... Only, something happened to us." The farmers who could not comprehend accepting a payment from the government *not* to grow cotton were anachronistic, even in the 1930's, even in Mississippi. We no longer "believed in liberty and freedom and independence, as the old fathers in the old strong, dangerous times had meant it."

The materialist view of democracy has gained more ground since Faulkner spoke. Many would even argue today that America is actually *premised* upon rejection of the sacramental view, as if the Founding Fathers' unwillingness to state a preference among Christian denominations was equivalent to a rejection of Christianity. As a society, we act as if we believe that the health of the commonwealth consists of things that can be counted—the GNP, the growth rate, the unemployment rate. But the social organism, like the human, can give off good vital signs and still be despairing unto death. Does economic growth always mean a better life for our citizens? Possibly, but so far as one can tell from public discussion it is an independent and eternal value. We are even told that it is our unavoidable fate to admit millions of foreigners to take their places as factors of production and consumption. It is not worth asking, apparently, whether this "growth" will be of actual benefit to our citizens. Beyond that, if, in the process of economic growth, our culture turns into something other than what we want, then that is seen as merely an unfortunate byproduct.

Our national defense is a question only of material means—more money, a better defense; less money, a poorer defense. It does not seem relevant to ask what we are defending and whether we have the guts to do it: it is all a question of means. The soldier willing to die for his country is identical to the mercenary; the leader of dash and courage is interchangeable with the military bureaucrat—after all, they receive the same training and are paid the same salaries. A society that has a spiritual certainty that its existence is worth defending regards the question of means as merely subsidiary, instrumental. A society that, on the other hand, believes it can purchase its defense with money alone is already so far out of touch with reality that its survival is in doubt. So is the society that believes its defense to be a question simply of efficiency in the use of material means. Such a society is suffering from the materialist delusion that it can ignore the terrible contingency of human fate and the need to strive for courage and wisdom.

The same delusion suggests that by relieving a man's material wants you make him virtuous. It might, indeed, in some cases help, but the formula is misleading. If, in so doing, you succeed also in convincing him—and others—that they need no longer strive for virtue, then you have undermined the possibility of a commonwealth in which either prosperity or virtue can flourish. Further, such utilitarian assumptions are bound to work against the individual liberty that the Declaration and Faulkner referred to; they are bound to lead to collectivism.

Faulkner quoted a maxim of an Irish statesman which said that God granted man liberty only on the condition of eternal vigilance, "which condition, if he break it, servitude is the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt." A child I know wrote the President that in order to save fuel he should make everyone ride horses. From the materialist perspective that pervades our society the youngster was completely logical and public-spirited. His innocent ignorance of the coercion that would be required to implement his suggestion was no different from the ignorance that marks most of our social policy. A well-known scientist recently declared that "we" have the technology to solve the problem of worldwide hunger and that therefore "we must" do so. He assumes, alas, that it is merely a question of means. If his hope is only that the demonstration of available means will enlighten mankind and allow it to save itself from hunger, then I applaud him, though I think he is mistaken. For how will he deal with communism and its planned hunger, or with those societies for which the solution to hunger is to receive perpetual aid from others? But if he means by his assertion that some collective American "we" should undertake to solve the world's problem, then I regard him as a social enemy. I can see what such a materialist fantasy will mean to an American workingman who is not hungry but who is strained to pay for his family's medical needs, for the gas he needs to get to a place to earn a living, and for a neighborhood where his children will be safe—his last neighborhood having been ruined by the same people who propose that it is his duty to save the world from hunger.

I do not wish to draw from all this, and I do not think Faulkner intended to draw from it, primarily the conclusion that the free market is preferable to the collectivist state, although that is true. The free marketplace is a pillar of prosperity and a prop to republican liberty. However, I think Faulkner meant that we have our priorities reversed. We are putting the instrument before the spirit. The market does not guarantee virtue. It does not guarantee anything except perhaps a chance to make the most of what nature and our parents gave us. To the contrary, our virtue, won over and over again in daily struggle, is a necessary precondition for the free market. To ignore this is not merely a mistake; it poses a peril that, in our confusion of values, we will lose both our liberty *and* our daily bread. Yet to ignore it is exactly what America does—at least at the level of public discussion and decision, while many of us, mercifully, still continue to observe moral reality as we plow our humble furrows.

—Clyde Wilson

Dr. Wilson is editor of The Papers of John C. Calhoun.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Literature & Ur-Reality

George Konrád: *The Loser;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

Milan Kundera: *The Joke;* Harper & Row; New York.

by Gary Vasilash

One of the ways that man knows himself is through writing. Writing of any type—from the driest technical report to the most flamboyant fantasy story—is a fiction. That is, it is beyond veracity. To call all written works fictions is not to diminish their importance in any way; fictions in this sense do not apply to superfluous constructs. Indeed, they are the bases of cultures. The Bible is a fiction in the sense that its message cannot be empirically proven. It exists for belief. And for those who do believe, nothing is more real. All forms of literature are fiction. It is extraordinarily hard to say that a particular piece of writing is a bona fide work of literature for reasons (a), (b), (c), etc. Everyone knows that *The Odyssey* and *Ulysses* are fictions that are literature; their qualifications for fitting within that category change with the person providing the parameters. One way that a work of literature can be defined is to say that it is a work that has time, field, and depth, and that it is a universe. (The Bible, then, is not, as some university classes would have it, literature, as it doesn't comprise *a* universe but *the* universe, as far as its believers are concerned [did anyone ever read Homer as gospel?], which is not to deny its obvious literary qualities.) The universe created in a work of literature cannot be a hermetic one; its signs must be accessible to an audience. Literature is public. It permits the reader to know something about himself, his world, and perhaps his god. Followed to an extreme, this argument might lead to the conclusion that *Time* magazine's issues are chapters in *the* novel. After all, it is a fiction by the definition used here. The writing it contains is artful. Its subject matter is the given universe; its departments include "People," "The World," and even "Religion." However, everyone knows that *Time* is not literature. One thing more than any other prevents its acceptance as such. Although this may sound like an appeal to Keats, it must be stated that literature provides Truth. *Time* magazine purportedly reports the "facts." When it reports, for example, that the space shuttle went up and came down, it is being, in its own way, truthful (i.e., R. Buckminster Fuller would point up that "up" and "down" make little sense when the earth is pictured as being something other than flat). A reader of every issue of *Time* will have the command of a large number of "facts" (pieces of information about what's taken as objective reality), but what will he really know?

Consider the Soviet Union. What does a Westerner who has never been there (or even one who has gone Intourist) know about it? Perhaps he knows a great many "things" if he reads *Time* magazine faithfully, and even more if he supplements his collection of pieces through the use of other periodicals. However, that person really doesn't know much at all about the Soviet Union. The reader looking for Truth (as opposed to Gradgrindian facts) would find it in the pages of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.* Life does not consist just of a series of facts (things done), of discrete events, of causes and effects. It is simultaneously more simple and more complex than that. The role of the writer of journalism is to attempt to create facts, events, causes. The role of the writer of literature is to put together a series of public signs that, through some synergistic effect that involves the signs, their place and time, the writer, and the reader, has a meaning which transcends the apparent coded message on the page: Truth is made manifest. This is not to say that a Western diplomat who may have to deal with Yuri Andropov should skip the available journalistic reports and just read Solzhenitsyn. However, this *is* to say that said diplomat would miss an entire facet of the situation, the dominant face behind the mask, if he were to go without reading Solzhenitsyn.

George (György) Konrád, a Hungarian, and Milan Kundera, a Czech, probably aren't the Solzhenitsyns of their respective homelands. Still, they are authors of literature which, in addition to serving the needs of their people, was apparently written so that Westerners can better understand Hungary and Czechoslovakia. For the people in these countries, the works act as an aide-mémoire. For the rest, they are a revelation. Truth knows no political, geographical, or chronological boundaries.

Concern for the West is fairly clear in both novels. Kundera writes in his preface to *The Joke* that the novel, much to his amazement, was published "without a trace of censorship!" in 1967, "in Communist Czechoslovakia one year before the Prague Spring." Undoubtedly it was published in a limited edition, one that would be rapidly bought up and so disappear. The book was banned in Czechoslovakia after the military invasion of 1968; it was removed from library shelves, erased from literary histories. Kundera was forced to emigrate. Kundera's amazement about the original uncensored publication indicates that he knew beforehand that his book would have a difficult official reception at best. The criticism in the novel of the people in the communist

Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of the Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

regimes, that dour tribe in control, points to the fact that Kundera knew that he would, if he wanted to remain a writer of literature, leave the country. Truth is the most potent enemy of the vicious and the humorless. Konrád is more specific about his awareness of the potency of literature, especially with regard to his novel's reception in the West. He recognizes that fictions are often accepted as reality. The narrator of *The Loser* says that Western intellectuals "prove with their articles that they know what socialism is; we prove it with our ulcers. After reading a few books they declare it a paradise; after a few more they say it is hell. They don't know what it is when they visit party secretaries; even now, when they are interviewing dissidents, they still don't." Write an ulcer. That's what these two authors have to do. It's clear that "ulcer" is a metaphor for pain, but in a world where readers have become inured to written descriptions of suffering (otherwise, how could people casually read about wars and disasters, two key subjects for "the news"?), it is extraordinarily hard to convey. Words, when properly used, have the power to create and destroy. Konrád and Kundera, men who work or worked in places where "to have written" can mean "to have committed a crime" (Konrád: "Anarchists lug around bombs in their briefcases—here you just slip your diary in your bag, and presto you've become an outlaw"), recognize that power. Indeed, *The Joke* shows how three sentences written on a postcard with a sense of irony, interpreted by a one-dimensional State, come to have an effect on a man's life that once could only have been caused by the gods or some other metaphysical force. Thus, words and their meaning, elements of literature, are of critical importance to both men, as evidenced in their texts. Each knows that he must use words that appear in *Time* magazine and yet cause them to result in a message that transcends factual banality.

Metaphor of place is a key device employed by the two writers. It is one that has proven to be very effective in conveying an understanding of what life is like behind "the iron curtain" (a metaphor of place that once worked wonderfully well, but which has disappeared not only because of détente, but because publications like *Time* couldn't picture themselves to be spies). Show someone a world map and ask her to locate the Gulag Archipelago. Undoubtedly, she'll begin searching the area designated the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It won't be found, but she'll know it's there, even if she's never read Solzhenitsyn. By defining a universe, a world, a country, a landscape, a city, a street, a building, a house, a room, a bed, the reader is able to locate himself vis-à-vis the author's creation. True meaning of place comes from art, not fact. That is, in *Time* one could read that Andropov was born in "the village of Nagutskoye in the northern Caucasus," a presumably factual datum that is virtually meaningless to all but those who have knowledge of the specific place (find it on the map; should you, then ask what it means). A room or a cell in Konrád's or Kundera's works, while obviously a fiction, is more meaningful than an actual geographical location (for the general reader in the West—certainly those in Nagutskoye find their home meaningful).

The novels have disparate plots and are set in different places. However, there is an important common point: both of the presented situations are products of and are controlled by Communist Parties. The protagonist of *The Loser* helped set up the Hungarian regime with Matyas Rakosi, Erno Gero, Imre Nagy, and others (who are designated with single initials in the book); the protagonist in *The Joke* joined the *Komunisticka Strana Ceskoslovenska* while a student. Both sincerely believed that they were doing the right thing. Both, unfortunately for their well-being in the new societies, retained a sense of humor. The worlds created by the authors, the ones in which the protagonists live, worlds which are like the "real" one (i.e., I assume that *Time* magazine and Nagutskoye both exist in the worlds though they aren't mentioned) yet made more *real* through the metamorphosing power of literature, are like a place in an Edgar Allan Poe story. The place is the *Maison de Santé* described in "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether." In that short story, the lunatic asylum's superintendent describes an uprising by the inmates:

> '. . . it all came to pass by means of a stupid fellow—a lunatic—who by some means, had taken it into his head that he had invented a better system of government than ever heard of before—of lunatic government, I mean. He wished to give his invention a trial . . . and so he persuaded the rest of the patients to join him in a conspiracy for the overthrow of the reigning powers.'

The revolt was a success. It becomes clear that the superintendent had literally and figuratively joined the ranks of his former charges. The worlds (i.e., "Hungary" and "Czechoslovakia") presented by the novelists are governed by the mad. In those worlds, only a sense of humor and the ability to perceive irony can keep one sane. The "invention" in the Poe story was put to an end once the keepers of order were able to escape their captivity via a sewer system. If fictions are or can become real, then perhaps we can one day read that other underground efforts were similarly successful in putting down the "better system of government" Konrád and Kundera bring to life. □

> "Milan Kundera . . . has essentially forsworn the novelist's obligation. . . . He is content to let his characters serve as cartoon figures in a landscape of indictment that lacks sufficient dimension to declare itself a portrait of the human condition."
>
> —*Village Voice*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Smoke Gets in Their Eyes

William L. O'Neill: *A Better World: The Great Schism: Stalinism and the American Intellectuals;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

Irving Howe: *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

by Lee Congdon

A specter is haunting the American left—the specter of conservatism. On every front—political, social, cultural—left-liberals are in retreat, shaken by a series of reverses and embittered because many of their quondam comrades, impressed more by the arguments of neoconservatism than by the platitudes of socialism, have defected to the enemy. And even those who have not wavered in their commitment to the left seem to be convinced that there will be no liberal revival until the totalitarian temptation, to which so many left-wing intellectuals have succumbed, is finally overcome.

William L. O'Neill has not lost his faith in the left, but he is sufficiently clear-eyed to see that the "sickness of liberalism," now as in the 1950's, is in large measure the result of "its own exploitable mistakes in the past." It is therefore incumbent upon contemporary liberals, he suggests, to create a movement "of the proper kind," one that is "ethical" and free of that anti-Americanism that has become the defining characteristic of American radicalism. To that end, he proposes that they confess publicly the sin of having lionized Stalin and the U.S.S.R., drawing what courage and inspiration they might require from those independent radicals who, with a fine impartiality, have always pronounced a plague on both capitalist and communist houses.

As a first step in exorcising the ghosts of the past, O'Neill has written a detailed and devastating brief against the pro-Soviet left, exposing the cynicism and stupidity that passes for wisdom in the pages of *The Nation* and *The New Republic* and ridiculing the egregious apologies for tyranny contrived by "progressive" writers such as Max Lerner, Alexander Werth, and Freda Kirchwey. In conscious opposition to Lillian Hellman and Victor Navasky, O'Neill is critical even of those who hedged, lied, or remained silent during HUAC's investigations of communists and fellow travelers in the motion-picture industry—though one wonders why the likes of Dalton Trumbo and Edward G. Robinson figure in a book about intellectuals.

And yet, for all his criticism of the Stalinists, O'Neill gives no quarter to American conservatives, who, to hear him tell it, are almost all military officers and businessmen, many of whom once admired the Soviet "experiment," as it was euphemistically described. His examples of this are Eddie Rickenbacker, who "believed in management's [including the Soviet government's] right to exploit labor," and Ambassador Joseph P. Davies, "one of those wealthy businessmen who were second only to progressive intellectuals in susceptibility to Russian charm." The unsuspecting reader would never guess from O'Neill's account that American conservatives were anti-Stalinist to the man or that many of the most effective critics of the Soviet Union were ex-radicals—undoubtedly because late-arriving conservatives such as John Dos Passos, James Burnham, Will Herberg, and Max Eastman might well be viewed as forerunners of contemporary neoconservatism.

O'Neill shares a good many of the Stalinists' illusions, insisting, for example, that Owen Lattimore and Edgar Snow were right about China. The argument is that Mao was preferable to Chiang Kai-shek and that a communist victory was inevitable in any event; hence, the progressives were wise to call upon the United States to abandon Nationalist China. Certainly the United States would not have "lost" China if it had supported the communists, but the point, after all, is that our country did not wish to see Mao and his band of ideologues triumph. O'Neill simply will not permit himself to entertain the idea that a leader such as Chiang, whatever his failings, might be preferable to those ideological tyrants who are forever assuring the credulous that they are building a better world. Exemplifying what Jeane Kirkpatrick has called "rationalism in foreign affairs," O'Neill refuses to choose between evils, citing with approval Max Lerner's starry-eyed proposal that the United States "oppose both Communism and anti-Communism on behalf of democratic and socialist movements everywhere" and complaining that "getting into bed" with Chiang and Franco meant sacrificing liberalism and reform to military needs. That in most areas of the world the real, as opposed to the wished-for, choice is often between totalitarianism and authoritarian regimes never seems to have occurred to him, but even if it had, one suspects that he would still prefer to ignore reality, trumpet abstract moral principles, and cling to illusory hopes. But the price of O'Neill's "moral purity" will be paid by others, fresh victims of the revolution who will follow the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Iranians into the dark night.

So, according to O'Neill's reading, the progressives' record was by no means uniformly disreputable. They had failed the Stalinist test, but they had been right about China, Hitler, Joe McCarthy, and Vietnam. Thus, the *anti*-Stalinist left was "on target every time." Democratic socialists knew, O'Neill avers, that "Stalinism was the betrayal of the Russian Revolution, not its fulfillment," a Trotskyist assumption that

Dr. Congdon teaches history at James Madison University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

betrays O'Neill's vulnerability to revolutionary romanticism. Gathered around forums such as the *New Leader* and *Politics*, the righteous continued to reprobate Stalinism without making any unseemly concessions to conservatism. Theirs was a pure radicalism, uncontaminated by compromise, *au-dessus de la melée*. As O'Neill sees it, the primary task of the moment is to increase the size of this principled, if unworldly, left, for "the Michael Harringtons and Irving Howes are so few."

It is not difficult to understand why O'Neill admires Howe, a prolific writer and able editor who has long been a leading spokesman for the anticommunist left as well as a truculent critic of conservatism. Readers of Howe's intellectual autobiography may, however, find his hostility to the right a bit perplexing, for in many ways the editor of *Dissent* is a conservative man. His dedication to Yiddish literature, for example, betokens a genuine love for the tradition to which he was born. He possesses a profound respect for New Critics such as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Cleanth Brooks, and a deep appreciation for the work of Eliot, Dostoevski, and Henry James, none of whom has ever been a hero of the working class. Initially sympathetic with New Leftists, he was too decent and intelligent to follow them into the abyss of nihilism, and he soon became one of their most uncompromising critics. Most revealing, perhaps, is a brief fragment of the final chapter in which Howe describes, somewhat apologetically, his enthusiasm for the ballet; radical friends, he admits, tease him for having succumbed to this "aristocratic" art. To them and to the ghost of Tolstoy, who chides him for sacrificing ethics to aesthetics, Howe is wont to reply "that there are kinds of beauty before which the moral imagination ought to withdraw." It is an insight worthy of Camus.

So one wonders why Howe continues to embrace socialism long after he has abandoned Marxism and conceded that "equality without liberty is a new mode of enslavement." The answer, I think, is that socialism has given form and therefore meaning to his life. Although, or perhaps because, he is unable to share the religious faith of his fathers, he is determined, at the last, to say with St. Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Looking back on the radical commitment of his youth, he confesses that "the vision of a lifetime devoted to an abiding value is hard to give up." That Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, former friends, have broken socialist ranks may provide some explanation for Howe's unrelenting and—at first glance—surprisingly vitriolic opposition to neoconservatism. The conservative thought of the 50's, he now believes, "can seem fairly benign when compared with the rougher, meaner versions of three decades later." Generous with his praise of veteran conservatives such as Peter Viereck and Russell Kirk, Howe cannot bring himself to forgive the neoconservatives who, as he sees it, turned on the left in its time of trouble. In glaring contrast to their treason, Norman Thomas, Howe points out proudly, was faithful unto death. Once, upon spotting the Grand Old Man of American socialism in an airport lobby, Howe "wanted to run over and say a few words of gratitude for his unspoken decision to see his commitment through to the very end."

> "One can . . . ask of Howe . . . whether anticommunism detracted from his sympathy for the oppressed and corroded his responsiveness to new modes of rebellion. . . . Howe failed to understand the gentleness and idealism of [Tom Hayden]."
>
> ***—The Progressive***
>
> "It is as though Howe feels warm life coursing through him only when he is in a political rage. . . . What Howe doesn't realize is that he and the Stalinists sound exactly alike."
>
> ***—The Nation***

But the dominant figure in Howe's life and thought is not Norman Thomas—it is Leon Trotsky. Having begun his career as a Trotskyist, Howe has never ceased to identify himself with that mercurial, fanatical revolutionary. In his volume on Trotsky in the "Modern Masters" series, Howe reflected that "to have come even briefly under his [Trotsky's] influence during the 1930s was to learn a lesson in moral courage. It was to learn the satisfaction of standing firm by one's convictions, to realize that life offers far worse things than being in a minority." Thus, although Howe long ago rejected Trotsky's view of the world, he continues to be moved by the man's ability to steer a steady course, unaltered even by personal tragedy and political failure. It is not surprising, therefore, that the self-portrait that emerges from Howe's pages bears a striking resemblance to that of the old Bolshevik leader—"partially" Jewish, principled, betrayed, isolated, resigned to tragic but heroic defeat. Indeed, this autobiography is essentially a long jeremiad for lost causes; it is rendered more poignant by the author's awareness of approaching death and by the gathering strength of neoconservatism.

The melancholia that informs this book is not, however, merely the result of neoconservative infidelity; it is also a consequence of Howe's recognition that the yearning for a better world has repeatedly ended "in muck, foul play, [and] murder." The simple truth is, according to Howe, that socialism is inherently problematic and that it dare not be anything more than "a loose egalitarian creed, a stubborn refusal to accept the given as immutable." It can offer only "a margin of hope" for "what may yet be." All in all, this is a socialism for people who do not like socialism, an ideology so devoid of content and so ethereal—it exists "at no point in time and space"—that it is irrelevant to any conceivable world of men. As a guide to the future, it is as useless as Trotskyism.

The burden of both these volumes, then, is that the debate on the American left has shifted from Stalinism to neo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conservatism. Stung by attacks on their integrity, the neoconservatives would like to be regarded as the legitimate intellectual and moral heirs of George Orwell, the self-styled democratic socialist most famous for his scathing denunciations of the political left. Indeed, in a recent article in *Harper's,* Norman Podhoretz claimed Orwell for neoconservatism, citing above all Orwell's criticism of the left-wing literary intelligentsia of his day. Not to be outdone, Howe published, almost at the same time, an essay on the author of *1984* in *The New Republic.* Howe conceded that there was a "streak of conservatism in Orwell's outlook," but, with himself in mind, he insisted that such a conservatism of sensibility does not conflict with democratic-socialist convictions; on the contrary, it sustains socialists in the call for an enlargement of our freedom and a deepening of our culture.

In the final analysis, of course, it scarcely matters whether or not Orwell would today describe himself as a neoconservative; on almost every issue of importance—totalitarianism, patriotism, left-wing intellectuals—the Englishman espoused characteristically conservative views. Ironically enough, the same might also be said of Irving Howe, whose fidelity to socialism is finally a function of his determination to frame a consistent, hence a meaningful, life. Whatever claims he might make to the contrary, his decision to remain steadfast clearly derives less from a concern for the public interest—the interest that Howe purports to serve—than from a deeply personal need. And if his neoconservative opponents can no longer lay claim to the same kind of intellectual consistency, they deserve respect for the courage they have displayed in repudiating publicly their former convictions. At the same time, these converts are no more indifferent to their personal destiny than Howe is; they live in the liberating confidence that repentance is the first step on the way to salvation. □

Fanciful Farming and Hindu Economics

Loretta Schwartz-Nobel: *Starving in the Shadow of Plenty;* McGraw-Hill; New York.

Albert O. Hirschman: *Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action;* Princeton University Press; Princeton.

by Bryce Christensen

America, so the advertising jingle goes, means "Baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet." This Madison Avenue representation of the national ethos is, of course, superficial, but its central elements—hot dogs and apple pie—do suggest an important feature of American life: most of us eat well, perhaps too well. The bounty of American agriculture provides so *many* apple pies and other palatal delights that obesity is a widespread health problem and dieting threatens to displace baseball as our favorite pastime. The well-stocked refrigerator is simply a given in most American homes, and starvation seems at least as far away as East Africa. But as the title of her book implies, Ms. Schwartz-Nobel has found severe hunger much closer than Addis Ababa. In Boston and Chicago, Pennsylvania and Mississippi, she has seen and interviewed hundreds of malnourished and even starving Americans. In graphic detail, she portrays the plight of these people: children eating laundry starch; widows choosing between heat and food; infants with the swelling legs and bellies of kwashiorkor. Though it is impossible to accept her hysterical claim that 30 million Americans—one in seven—are going hungry and that starvation is now at "epidemic levels" in the U.S., Schwartz-Nobel makes it equally impossible to dismiss the problem of hunger in America as trivial or unreal.

At present, Ms. Schwartz-Nobel explains, neither the world as a whole nor America in particular faces food shortages: hunger is currently the consequence of various economic, moral, social, and governmental barriers in this country and abroad which stand between the needy and available nourishment. But in the not-too-distant future real scarcity could cause more prevalent hunger. Indeed, practices and trends in the much-lauded American agribusiness community—which feeds Americans and the citizens of over 100 other countries—do not promise long-term productivity. The relatively small, energy-efficient family farm run by people who feel an emotional attachment to the land they cultivate has largely been replaced by the mammoth farm run by absentee investors who are so concerned with immediate profits that they refuse to see how they jeopardize America's potential to feed herself and others by relying too heavily upon petrochemicals and machinery and caring too little for the soil. This is a problem identified and thoroughly discussed before, notably by Wendell Berry in *Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977), but in the context of Ms. Schwartz-Nobel's stark depiction of present-day hunger, it seems particularly urgent.

In pointing out contemporary and possible future difficulties in feeding Americans, Ms. Schwartz-Nobel does suggest solutions, and some of her suggestions—such as eliminating waste, storing food, and gardening at home—are sensible. But by themselves such measures are inadequate. The problems of hunger and agriculture must be solved in their larger context. "Our agriculture,"

Mr. Christensen is an editorial intern with the Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ms. Schwartz-Nobel writes, "is a part of our total culture. It cannot be dealt with in isolation." The root cause of America's food problems, she accurately observes, is the moral and spiritual malaise produced when "a number of the simple traditional values that had bound American people and families together were destroyed." Consequently, only as America "reestablishes a sense of community and a sense of common destiny" can we hope to solve the problems of food production and distribution. Well said. Unfortunately, as an established liberal feminist, Ms. Schwartz-Nobel is herself so profoundly at odds with the "simple traditional values" of America's past that her program for regaining "a sense of community" is both fatuous and self-contradictory. Only a feminist could lament that many Americans have recently "*stopped* cherishing" some unspecified "values," and yet not say a word in defense of the traditional family or marriage in all of her discussion of hungry families without fathers. And only a liberal could portray the government welfare system as "blundering token programs" with "records of inefficiency, corruption and failure" and yet (in the same paragraph) indict President Reagan for reducing these very programs. By demanding greatly *expanded* welfare, Social Security, and food-stamp programs (without mention of increased taxes or inflation), Ms. Schwartz-Nobel is repudiating the value-based bonds of community whose renewal she professedly seeks.

When the federal government becomes the guarantor of individual well-being, then the claims of family, church, and community all seem either burdensome or superfluous and therefore atrophy. True, Ms. Schwartz-Nobel does encourage participation in nongovernmental "Hunger Organizations," and certainly such efforts are commendable. However, the donation of food is most meaningful for recipient and giver within the broader and deeper relationships of traditional institutions. Though Chevrolet's jingle fails to mention the fact, Americans find even apple pie unsatisfying when eating at the table of strangers.

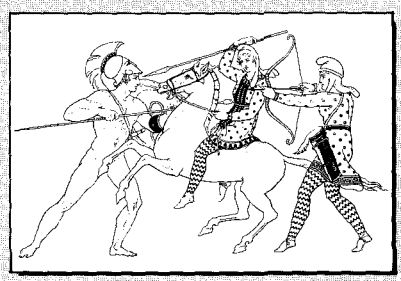
Eating and dissatisfaction are both concerns of Albert O. Hirschman in *Shifting Involvements*, albeit in a somewhat peripheral and abstract way. His larger concern is the development of "a *phenomenology* of involvements and disappointments that is meant to account for the swings from private concerns to public action and back." He therefore discusses food simply as a type of consumer good least likely to disappoint because in satisfying a basic physiological need it repeatedly gives the consumer the pleasure of moving from actual discomfort to palpable comfort. By way of quotes from Edward Young and Samuel Johnson, though, Hirschman does concede that even ingestion does not please man the same way it does animals, and by way of a broad analysis of other types of consumer goods he establishes that material acquisitions in general are even more disappointing. This, so Hirschman's argument runs, is why people turn from the concerns of personal welfare to public activism. But since public involvement is fraught with its own frustrations, the movement is cyclic.

That Hirschman quotes such writers as Young and Johnson suggests a breadth of scholarship rare among economists (the book was originally written as the 1979 Eliot Janeway Lectures), just as his rejection of the simple "infrahuman wantons" of traditional consumption theory reveals an unusual resistance to positivist premises. Nevertheless, Hirschman shares too many of the limitations of his colleagues to be as wise or as readable as the men he quotes. His occasional lapses into jargon are annoying; his frequent citation of his own previous works seems pedantic; and his belaboring of the obvious makes welcome his apology "for using so many words in making plausible something that must seem obvious common sense to the general reader." The most serious shortcoming of the book, though, is a reductionism similar to, if not quite as severe as, that for which Hirschman faults other economists: Hirschman reduces man to a thoroughly secular being.

LIBERAL CULTURE

Trueness

We live in a world where words are losing their meanings. One of the most oppressive facets of our reality is that advertisement deceives: signs above businesses do not tell the true story, acrylic pretends to be wool, and plumbers charge a horrendous fee just for tinkering —not repairing. But wait—there *is* an oasis of truthfulness where a word is as good as gold. According to press information, two punk-rock bands—poetically named Aggression and the Vandals—staged a rock concert in Huntington Park, California and dutifully fulfilled their linguistic promise. The ensuing rampage resulted in:



> a rock and bottle throwing riot that spread over a six-block area as looters shattered store windows . . . . Forty-one people, most of them juveniles, were arrested and 10 policemen were hurt.

Shouldn't we be grateful to Providence that there are people who still care about the honest relationship between word and meaning? □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Should an economist exclude man's theological concerns from his study of disappointment, no one could seriously object: it was after all Caesar's image embossed on the coin Christ held up. But Hirschman does not. Repeatedly he raises the issue of the human impulse to devotion and every time he discredits the validity of belief in the transcendent. He thus truncates the meaning of the quotes from Young and Johnson, both devout Christians, by arguing that despite the traditional use of such observations about man's insatiability as "the starting point for discussions about the existence of God," they are properly considered merely as symptomatic of "a *certain phase of Western* civilization." It is indeed the *Western* notion of the otherworldly that Hirschman most categorically repudiates: in his closing chapter he argues that the public-private cycle he has chronicled harmonizes nicely with pantheistic Hinduism but not with "the almost vindictive monotony of Judeo-Christian strictures by which we gain or forfeit salvation by . . . one consistently virtuous character." The Western mind is not pantheistic, however, and any analysis of Western socioeconomic culture which expressly repudiates its intimations of the transcendent leaves not a Hindu sense of dharma but only a militantly secular utopianism. When, for example, Hirschman tells us that the disappointment engendered by the failure of Enlightenment social ideals is attributable to a "poverty of our imagination that paradoxically produces images of 'total' change in lieu of more modest expectations," he is in a sense correct; however, he evidently does not understand that the modern imagination suffers from the impoverishment of extremism precisely because it has been secularized. Indeed, Hirschman seems more secularist than Hindu when he compares medieval pilgrimages to modern attendance at sporting events and again when he rather glibly asserts that "in an age in which religious fervor is at a low ebb" public activism possesses the "ability to satisfy vaguely felt needs for higher purpose and meaning." So completely does Hirschman equate public activity with religion that he even quotes a statement by Pascal concerning the joy Christians find in seeking holiness to explain "the fusion of—or confusion between—striving and attaining" common among political crusaders. The confusion is real here, but it is Hirschman's, not Pascal's. The author of the *Pensées* knew full well the difference between the abiding consolations of worship and the vicious cycle of disappointment in which all profane enthusiasms are trapped. □

The Historical Tricycle

***The Village Voice Anthology (1956-1980);* Edited by Geoffrey Stokes; Quill; New York.**

David Harris: *Dreams Die Hard: Three Men's Journeys Through the Sixties;* St. Martin's/Marek; New York.

by Daniel J. O'Neil

These two books present a chronicle of issues and personalities of the turbulent period (1960's-1970's) that shaped our contemporary society. Individual expression, search for community, civil rights, feminism, sexual exploration, revolution, the questioning of old orthodoxies and the assertion of new ones—all are present. Stokes has assembled a representative sample of period *Village Voice* essays. The Harris book portrays the interrelationship and exploits of three youth leaders—David Harris, Dennis Sweeney, and Allard Lowenstein—as seen or remembered by Harris. It is a story of youthful recruitment, adventure, disillusionment, and finally assassination. Together the books effectively capture the flavor of one of the more abrasive eras in American history and invite a scrutiny of that period of systemic disorder. Why did the 1950's—a time of order, stability, patriotism, and satisfaction—evolve into the tempestuous 60's? Does Vietnam really explain it? Why does the Eisenhower era, from today's perspective, seem a Golden Age? Who were the people most vulnerable to the slogans of disorder and who were their leaders? Is our society better or worse for having experienced that trauma?

Just as such traditional students of revolution as Plato, Burke, and Tocqueville had predicted, revolution stemmed from a cleavage in the dominant elite rather than from an explosion at the bottom. Persons who had been richly endowed by American society found it wanting and became its most scathing critics. University students—perhaps the most indulged sector of American life—played a major role. These student dissidents came not from the community colleges and mediocre technical institutions but from the sanctuaries of the elite. Harris's book centers on Stanford: Lowenstein's recruitment of student activists, Harris's own election as student-body president, and Sweeney's well-publicized missionary travel from the classroom to Mississippi. There is much about meetings, organizational strategy, and happenings and very little about study, contemplation, or academic challenge. The young privileged class searched for something lacking in its routinized existence. The effort progressed with maximal publicity, constant hosannas, and seemingly unlimited excursion funds. Numerous saints were canonized without the inconvenience of martyrdom.

Why do the privileged, at certain points in history, reject the system that has nurtured and elevated them? Why did so many French and Russian sons of

Dr. O'Neil teaches political science at the University of Arizona.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the nobility embrace revolution? Were they perhaps assured of both adventure and minimal risk? Did they perhaps assume that the new order that would succeed the destruction of the old would defer to their leadership? Were they masochistically attempting to compensate for the sins of their fathers? Why did Dennis Sweeney, a youth with a bright future, pander to the regimented, puritanical, statist society of the Vietcong?

Plato envisaged the decline of the ideal society as related to flaws in breeding and in education. While many would dispute the former concern, the latter is most suggestive. Is it possible that the young rebels of the 60's and 70's were conditioned by their upbringing for the role they would play? Perhaps the children of the World War II generation—sheltered from the Depression and war experience of their parents—were sheltered from life itself. Perhaps there was an overcompensation—a resolve that one's children should experience a better existence. Nothing was too good for this generation; "no" was not in its vocabulary. But perhaps it failed to learn discipline, restraint, self-control, and limit. Perhaps it failed to grasp the tragedy of human existence.

The rebellious generation's formal education stressed the pragmatic and the vocational but seldom disciplined or challenged. Especially ominous was its neglect of comparative history. There is little that is more detrimental to utopianism than the sophisticated study of history. The student of history sees his age and his society in a comparative perspective and realizes how little is new. The romance of revolution fades after

"'Dreams Die Hard' . . . this very fine piece of reportage-as-book . . . is served up with all of the earnest zeal that young people used to display . . ."

—*Chicago Tribune*

one examines the record of the "glorious" revolts: the prerevolutionary promises and postrevolutionary realities, the dogmatism, the intolerance, the violence, and the bloodshed that accomplish so little. Revolution often leads to the gulag, merely substituting a more oppressive regime for a less oppressive one.

Exposure to comparative history usually fosters an appreciation of the imperfections and limits of human nature. It encourages placing one's own world in a more realistic perspective. Existing reality is contrasted with mundane alternatives, not with abstract perfection; its limitations and weaknesses thus become more intelligible and tolerable. Claims of ideological perfectionism are viewed with contempt. Charges that a current movement or measure represents man's last hope receive the ridicule they deserve. Contentions that conditions are so bad—the system so oppressive—that any change will be an improvement are dismissed. The student of comparative history stands apart from the ideologue who is intoxicated with change and who rejects his society in the name of a nonexistent ideal. Few of the outraged participants in the turbulent events of the 60's and 70's were exposed to or interested in comparative history. Seldom was it viewed as "relevant."

How might one explain the media coverage of these enthusiasts? Initially, none spoke for any significant clientele, and yet each was successful in securing ample coverage from the respectable media. Their inane manifestos were often treated with the deference rendered a Pauline epistle. Lowenstein's many-purpose letters merited the *New York Times's* attention. Sweeney trouped to Mississippi with all the subtlety of a papal missionary visit. Harris's election as Stanford student-body president merited national media attention. Why were the American media so willing to serve these pygmies? What explains the mutual-ingratiation exercise? What *was* the link between the media and the activists? Why should an American media, subsidized by business and dependent upon openness and freedom, cater to people who were promoting a statist, regimented, puritanical society? Why have the media been so vulnerable to the left? Harris and Stokes provide no answers.

Moreover, the described activists seem to have experienced a state of boredom not unlike that characterizing the privileged rebels in prerevolutionary France and Russia. Harris's luminaries seem to lack family ties, a sense of place,

"This anthology mostly succeeds . . . it is good enough to justify more anthologies like this."

—*New York Times Book Review*

and pride in possession. They lacked discipline and were persistently trying to "find themselves." They seldom remained still; contemplation seemed foreign to their natures. Lowenstein, for example, moved from an unsuccessful academic career to an unsuccessful administrative career to an unsuccessful literary career to an unsuccessful political career. Yet he purported to possess expertise on a long list of domestic issues as well as on Central American and African politics. Sweeney moved from activism to music to carpentry to assassination. His conspiracy-obsessed world view culminated in the belief that his person had been wired by the CIA and that his old mentor Allard Lowenstein was somehow involved in the plot. Harris, likewise, shifted from one concern to another, including a temporary marriage to folksinger Joan Baez. Collectively, the three flipped from avocation to avocation, from crisis to crisis, from locale to locale—all eagerly willing to pontificate on the latest cause.

But what transformed these dissidents into leaders—and each purported with some truth to be a youth leader? They were not characterized by any profundity of thought, tradition of service, or rec-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ord of accomplishment. Image, public relations, and enthusiasm, linked with the luck of being at the right place at the right time, seem to be the essence of that transformation. What, if anything, does this leadership recruitment pattern tell us about our society? Were the youth leaders of the 60's-70's perhaps a copy—or, more accurately, an exaggeration—of the larger leadership elite? Is there something defective in a society that stresses image, public relations, and enthusiasm in recruiting its rulers? Is it unexpected that the finalists in the contest often possess the talents of faith healers and used-car dealers? Despite their loathing of America as bourgeois, decadent, and materialistic, it might be argued that these three luminaries at another time could have been successful in legitimate politics. They were as American as their critics.

Viewed from the perspective of the 80's there are a number of impressions conveyed collectively by the two books. One is the sectarianism of the movement: the charismatic leaders, the dogmatic clashes, the perennial sense of betrayal, the inevitable liberal-radical split. One thing emerges most strongly: the vulgarity—the happenings, marches, slogans, jingles, and unending witnessing. Another impression raises several issues. How does contemporary "liberated" Southeast Asia compare with the de-Americanized world sought by the peace activists? Is it the world they promised in the 60's and 70's? What is their degree of responsibility for the latest tropical gulag? And, domestically, are we better off as a people due to this creedal experience? Are our families more cohesive, our spiritual values more intact, our lives and property more secure? Did the destabilization of our society result in more pluses than minuses? Few would argue the affirmative.

There is an air of sadness that permeates the writings of the ancient Greeks. Because of their organic-cyclical perception of reality, they expected even the just society to decline. Traditionally, such pessimism has been foreign to Americans because of our Enlightenment legacy, our progressive view of history, our resources, and our good fortune. We have seldom contemplated the end of our world. But our loss of nerve linked with zero population growth and failure to control immigration could mean that the future Los Estados Unidos will be vastly different from the world we have inherited. The cardinal concern of the future might be: can and should this trend be reversed? □

A Feminist & a Flaneur

Margaret Atwood: *Dancing Girls;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

Margaret Atwood: *True Stories;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

Robert Walser: *Selected Stories;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Betsy Clarke

No one familiar with the so-called "feminist movement" has failed to note its schizophrenia. The condition evidently appears as a result of feminists' attempts to seem both potent and oppressed at the same time. For example, during the 1982 elections the National Organization for Women complained that Congress had too few women members, and then they promptly targeted nearly all of the female candidates for defeat. Because they were so successful in their mission to elect more men to the Senate and House of Representatives, NOW will be able to lodge the same charge of sexism in 1984. On the domestic front, publications such as *Ms.* heap almost profane adoration on men who stay home nurturing children while needling women providing the same service to get out of the house and finally make something of themselves. On the subject of national defense, the leftist women's groups seem to view the American military as both the liberator of women and the oppressor of humankind, or whatever we are all being called these days.

Then there is the issue of authors' portrayals of women in books. Oddly, the very mind-set that crabs about the depiction of women as dependent, helpless cookie-bakers in children's textbooks will, with the next pen stroke, execute a "feminist" novel in which the women are suicidal, institutionalized, drug-addicted, or otherwise out of control of their lives. The misogyny of the feminist movement must baffle men, for while male behavior toward women has not always been exemplary, it is women who have promoted the most bitter attack on members of their sex and how they have traditionally chosen to live their lives.

In this regard, Margaret Atwood's collection of stories, *Dancing Girls,* is standard fare. Before a backdrop of brooding women and inscrutable men parade the woman lunatic, the female cerebral palsy victim, the deceitful woman, the dull, traditional woman. The dancing girls of the title are actually prostitutes. All of them contribute to that popular feminist theme: woman as gimp.

Though absorbing in many respects, Atwood's short fiction analyzes the female with a cold, clinical eye. Clearly, the author sees herself as a "breed apart" from the average, garden-variety woman. But why does she hate us so much? Whatever the motivation for her stories, they do not bear any relation to the lives of most women, nor can they be expected to. Like most of those prominent in the feminist movement, Margaret Atwood has never lived as most women

Miss Clarke is a frequent contributor to Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AND NOW A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR.

This journal of opinion is being brought to you by The Rockford Institute.

If you are already a subscriber, you are aware that we stand four-square against today's Liberal Culture and the passive publishing cult of me-tooism.

If this is your first issue of *Chronicles of Culture* (or you've been borrowing a copy and yearn for your own), and you are intrigued by what we are addressing on the surrounding pages, let us offer you this businesslike proposition.

At the completion of sampling this issue, once you are convinced of the product's value and worth, return to this page and detach the card that has been cleverly concealing a portion of this message.

In return for your $18, we will commence your subscription and forward the next 12 issues of *Chronicles of Culture*.

We promise you twelve months of unrelenting criticism, original thought, verve, style, and engaging, enjoyable reading. In short, one year's worth of decidedly articulate commentary.

As a special incentive, we'll send you a button off our page:

A round, two-color, crystal-clear 3½-inch badge that conveys where we—and you—stand, in one unadorned mildly hyphenated word.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

live, and therefore knows nothing about them. Many of the poems in *True Stories,* published simultaneously with *Dancing Girls,* are rife with references to women being tortured: "They sewed her face/ shut, closed her mouth/ to a hole the size of a straw, . . ." There are references in both the stories and the poems to men tying together the legs of women in labor, as if the practice were as common as polishing shoes. And of course there is that perpetual feminist favorite, the woman who "punctured herself with kitchen skewers/and bled to death on a greasy/oilcloth table, rather than bear/ again and past the limit." What does Miss Atwood know about bearing past the limit? Has she ever even met anyone with more than two children?

To be fair, Miss Atwood is a talented writer. Though her themes are trite, she endows her work with interesting insights and good detail. The metaphors and similes, so central to her poetry, enhance her fiction with their accuracy. She observes her prey, whether the women of her stories or the equally unattractive land crabs of her poems, with a trained eye. Part of her "Sunset I" is exemplary:

> Tonight there's no crescendo
> in the sun either, no brilliant red
> catastrophes, no slashed
> jugulars; merely a smudged egg.

But the other side of these adroitly recorded perceptions is that Miss Atwood insists on casting some of our favorite images against type: sunsets, Christmas (she doesn't care for the part about the baby), love, democracy, motherhood. Surely there are worse forces at work in the universe. Is there no sense of wonder in this woman? What one wouldn't give, by the end of it all, for a quiet recitation of "Ode on a Grecian Urn" or a kind word for a poppy.

Robert Walser, an alienated man, lived and wrote under the shadow of mental disintegration, and therefore Susan Sontag, who contributed the foreword to his volume of stories, has seen in him the seeds of genius. Alienation has long been considered a virtue by the left, but Walser's brand is one of cranky weirdness rather than of principled individuality. In this volume, the author manages to distinguish himself as a curiosity and not much else. The 40-odd entries in his *Selected Stories* are in fact more essays than stories, and more therapeutic ramblings than essays.

> " 'Dancing Girls' is a stunning collection . . . . she manages to convey the complexities and contradictions of ordinary life."
>
> —***New York Times Book Review***

Born in Switzerland in 1878, Walser wrote several novels and many short works of fiction before committing himself to a mental hospital in 1929 and ending his career as a writer. He was found dead on a hill near the sanatorium in 1956, having gained neither popularity nor profit for his efforts. His history explains why the stories, arranged in chronological order, began to slip in quality after 1917. By 1925, they are downright bad.

Walser's themes are the classic ones: individual isolation, the decline of standards and values, dreams versus reality, and so forth, but they are addressed in a surprisingly superficial, unsophisticated way. Furthermore, his style is staccato, perfunctory, and repetitious. "Civilization still seems to be an unfinished task" is a typical example of the depth of Walser's perception. But then civilization is not Walser's long suit. His narrators are often lonely, socially inept writers looking for a clean place to sleep and a little kindness. But, as Walser says of himself, "People who have no success with people have no business with people." Judging from these essays, Walser never tried very hard, for his realm of interest seems to begin and end with himself. Though the stories represent the years 1907 to 1929, Walser appears peculiarly unfazed by world events. He prefers to draw attention either to his own personal and financial problems, as in "Helbling's Story," an examination of a pathetic man with grandiose dreams but ordinary skills who alternates between self-knowledge and self-delusion, or to his real or imagined enemies.

Walser, a volatile personality under any circumstances, goes out of control when describing rich people. In "The Walk," for example, an essay in part defending the exercise as labor necessary for a writer's inspiration, Walser unleashes an abusive harangue on an unidentified man of means without any known provocation. In other stories, he automatically equates the rich with moral depravity and contrasts their undeserved wealth with his own poverty. This is insight? A better writer might have at least attempted to examine the effect of material comfort on character, with all its ambiguities.

> "Robert Walser was a writer of considerable wit, talent and originality."
>
> —***New York Times Book Review***
>
> "Walser is one of the most remarkable and fully realized stylists in modern literature . . . if we could have all of Walser's writings together . . . it would be possible to . . . see the world as it has never been seen before."
>
> —***The Nation***

The author is at his best recording images of nature: "The Alps have come to life and dip with fabulous gestures their foreheads into the water." Of Cézanne, he notes, "The things to which he gave shape looked back at him as if they had been pleased, and that is how they look at us still." There are, in fact, a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

number of nice touches in Walser's work. But this is not English 101. Readers expect fineness consistently throughout a professional's offerings.

Because of Walser's psychological problems, there is a tendency to be charitable about the author's talent, however undeveloped. We love stories about the toiling failure who dies poor and in disgrace, only to be awarded greatness by future generations. Walser's writings, however, are a cross between *Aesop's Fables* and bad haiku. The boring sketches with their simplistic, irrelevant morals are much more representative than the few competent but unremarkable efforts of Walser at his most impressive. Despite the message of our cultural gurus, mental illness is not necessarily a symptom of aptitude, and some writers remain unread for a reason. □

School Daze

Rockne M. McCarthy, James W. Skillen, William A. Harper: *Disestablishment A Second Time: Genuine Pluralism for American Schools;* Christian University Press; Grand Rapids, MI.

James S. Coleman, Thomas Hoffer, Sally Kilgore: *High School Achievement: Public, Catholic, and Private Schools Compared;* Basic Books; New York.

by John C. Caiazza

In November 1982, the *Boston Globe,* which, like the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times,* exudes an efflorescence of hard-core liberalism in its editorials, attacked the Reagan Administration's actions concerning aid to private schools. The editorial accused the administration of wrongfully diverting Federal money from public schools to private, and further stated, in effect, that this reallocation of funds was to the benefit of the rich and the detriment of the poor. Reaction was swift: on December 3rd, the *Boston Pilot,* the official newspaper of the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, announced that the Reverend Eugene P. Sullivan, Superintendent of Schools of the Archdiocese, had denounced the *Globe* editorial as "uncalled for and unjust." On a historical plane, this is merely one episode in the conflict between Church and State that extends back to Nero and Diocletian. Although minor in the large scale, it still holds serious implications for the role of private schools in American education and the role of education in American life generally.

The editorial in the *Boston Globe* relied on and at the same time perpetuated the stereotype of private schools as preserves for the children of the wealthy, refuges for the offspring of racists, and as simply inimical to the American way of life. The *Globe*'s characterizations—held by many—are untrue. These two books emphatically and comprehensively refute them, especially as they apply to Catholic schools. (Catholic high schools constitute roughly two-thirds of the 9.1 percent of the nation's high schools which are private.) *High School Achievement* compiles the results of a long-term statistical study comparing student achievement in public and private high schools, both Catholic and non-Catholic, from the sophomore to the senior years. This study, sponsored by the Federal government, concludes that private schools prepare their students better academically than public schools, and examines the reasons and the policy implications of this differential. *Disestablishment a Second Time* extends the argument, as it were, by presenting a historical and philosophical analysis of the Jeffersonian ideology that guides public policy towards school organization in America today, and which, as its authors amply prove, works to the benefit of a secular, homogeneous public-education sector, and to the detriment of private, particularly religious, schools. Combined, the books make a compelling case, both practically and philosophically, for increased public support of private education, whether by tuition waiver, voucher system, or direct public funding.

High School Achievement is another of the "Coleman Reports" that have had

a powerful effect on U.S. public-education policy. It concludes that an average private high school is academically superior to an average public high school and that the difference in academic achievement amounts, again on an average basis, to one full grade level. Most public educators are aware of this difference and have a standard excuse: the public schools cannot select students but must accept everyone, while the private schools can weed out the stupid or the disruptive student. Yet, suggests Coleman, a conscious policy of student selection is not what makes the difference, but rather the fact that the

Dr. Caiazza is an administrator for the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

students in private schools have parents committed to paying for their children's education, parents who are likely to support the demands of the schools on the students, and who take education seriously. Thus, the process is one of self-selection. Further, Coleman concludes that the kinds of students, buildings, equipment, or programs do not cause the difference in achievement levels; the internal processes of the schools—course work, homework, disciplinary climate, and student behavior—make the difference.

Still, the private schools are called elitist and racist. Coleman and his coauthors conclude that there is some truth to the first charge, for the families of private school children are generally better off financially than those of public school children. However, they go on to say that the public schools are deeply stratified by income level and hence elitist: parents select public schools by their choice of residence; those who can afford to live in suburban areas where the public schools are usually better than those in the cities do so. The charge of racism is simply false, particularly for Catholic high schools. The fact is that many black parents would rather scrape together the tuition money to send their children to Catholic school, often despite a religious difference, than send them to the free public schools, where the conditions can frequently be described as gruesome. Coleman even calls the enrollment of blacks in Catholic schools a "tradition . . . which is developing rapidly."

Coleman et al. make a significant and possibly ominous point: there is nothing intrinsically "Catholic" or "private" about increased homework, better attendance, and the other factors that account for the difference in achievement levels; public schools are *prevented* from putting such policies into effect because of various laws, regulations, and attitudes. Public educators are often no less dedicated than private educators, but private schools can "more easily discipline, suspend, or expel students without concern about legal suits from parents (a matter which is of serious concern to some public school principals); and they can more frequently depend on parents to reinforce the demands they make on students." This means that the old American ideal of a "common school" which educates children from all social backgrounds, races, religions, and abilities, which inculcates an egalitarian ideal, raises all students to roughly the same degree of academic competence, and which fits them for various occupations and further schooling is one which, according to Coleman et al., is best found in the Catholic high schools of this nation.

Is the traditional notion of an American common school worth preserving? "No," answer the authors of *Disestablishment a Second Time,* which calls for the public support of nonpublic education, and which attacks the concept of a publicly supported, homogeneous school system for the United States. Such a unified system did not exist prior to the early part of the 19th century in America, and it grew very slowly until the public school system as we know it today became, as the authors say, "established." Resistance to the growth of public schools was significant, for, as they point out, the Catholic Church in the 19th century saw the public schools as a vehicle for Protestantism, and so started its own system. Indeed, Catholic pastors were encouraged to build schools even before they built churches for their immigrant flocks

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

The Past Today

"Great-power rivalry: in some progressive circles, mere mention of it is considered reactionary. The concept is something to be relegated to the history books with the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs. Liberals since the 19th century believe that modern times have vanquished the days of constant struggle, war, territorial expansion, succession crises, and imperialism. They are wrong. The 'great game' goes on; only the players and their relative strengths have changed over time. The stakes remain high."

—from "Rivals, Revulsion, and Resolve" by William R. Hawkins

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Perceptibles—Waste of Money
The American Proscenium—Stage—Screen—Art
Music—Correspondence—Liberal Culture
Social Register—Journalism—In My Solitude

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

newly arrived from Ireland, Germany, Italy, and Poland. Just as Catholics saw the Protestant content of public education in the 19th century as a threat to their religion, the authors of *Disestablishment a Second Time* see the secular content of public education in the 20th century as a threat to *all* religions. Indeed, they claim that the values implicit in American public education constitute a religion in themselves, a civil religion which some sociologists have called "Americanism."

This accusation raises some interesting points. If the authors are correct, the conflict is not between two branches of traditional religion, but between traditional religion and a new form of religion, one derived not from transcendental sources or from tradition, but from the practice of our civil lives. The authors call this new religion "republicanism," and find its roots in the thought and writings of Thomas Jefferson. However, this conflict has even more ancient roots, for in *The City of God* St. Augustine portrayed just such a rivalry in fifth-century Rome between the Christian Church and the civil religion of the Romans. A civil religion—whether of Americanism or Romanism—is a kind of natural religion based on the desire of human beings to stand in awe of something and to pursue a vision of order and of peace. The state, especially a large and beneficent one, may fulfill the need for an object of worship, so in effect a civil religion is a simple outgrowth of patriotism. At its extreme, however, the growth can develop unseemly proportions, until the systematic elevation of civil ideals replaces religious ideals. The coming of Christianity did away with the need for civil religions as it provided one religion for all mankind, its catholicity made possible by its transcendent nature, i.e., one religion given from above by God rather than many religions arising from below in separate states. Now, however, with the decline of Christianity, particularly Protestantism, as the unofficial religion of America, civil religion has reasserted itself.

The authors' argument is that public education is really a form of religious education, that public support of it via tax levies gives it an unfair advantage, and that therefore the public schools ought to be "disestablished." But what is the practical effect of this? Advocates of public education are correct in saying that public education performs a service by inculcating the values of an American consensus, and has in this way made "Americans" out of the children of immigrants, whether from Russia and Ireland in the last century, or Mexico and Cuba in this one. Public education rests on the notion of an American consensus, that is, on a set of beliefs common to all Americans, no matter what their race, country of origin, or religion. *E pluribus unum,* "from many come one," is probably the most accurate of the various mottoes used to characterize the American way of life, for, from a diversity of peoples, races, and religions unknown in any other nation in history, we have been able to fashion a single nation based on a set of common ideas and devoted to a common cause of diversity and freedom. We should not be too ready to relinquish an institution that promotes such a goal.

What then is the effect of disestablishing the public schools? The authors face this question squarely by analyzing several European states, including Holland, which are "consociational," that is which support religious as well as public schools in an undifferentiated manner. In effect, Holland has given up its civil consensus *considered as a formal set of ideas.* But Holland's national identity is already set, and its history is devoid of the mass immigration the United States has experienced. Is America's national identity as firm and clear as Holland's? The authors apparently think so, but I do not agree, not when bilingualism is a hot topic of current debate. The United States could end up not like Holland, where everybody speaks the same language, but like Belgium or Canada, where linguistic separation remains and where cultural separation has hurt the peace and progress of the nation. The best solution would be to shift the consensus away from its current secular, hence inevitably irreligious emphasis, and back to the more traditional notion of one nation "under God." Such a change would explicitly acknowledge the religious tradition of the American people, something which is currently not done in public schools and which could be done without promoting one religion over another, that is, without violating the First Amendment.

Aside from the thorny issue of consensus versus religious diversity, the substance of *Disestablishment a Second Time* and *High School Achievement* serves to make one point especially clear—that private education is being denied its fair share of public monies. The denial of public aid on the basis of the separation of Church and State is a cop-out. It protects the public weal from only one thing: diversity, ironically the one element that most characterizes the American ideal. □

In the Mail

***Public Employees, Unions, and the Erosion of Civic Trust: A Study of San Francisco in the 1970s* by Randolph H. Boehm and Dan C. Heldman; University Publications of America; Frederick, MD.** San Francisco provides many antimodels (i.e., things which should not be emulated). This study of the ascendancy of union power in the public sector of that city details another.

***Christian Mysticism: A Psychotheology* by William McNamara; Franciscan Herald Press; Chicago, IL.** The attempt here is to clearly and simply define Christian mystical experiences. We're having trouble with the following: "The Our Father is 'the prayer of the heart' par excellence. This may impress you more profoundly if you meditate on it backwards." Backwards?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coordinates Through the Void

Elias Canetti: *The Torch in My Ear;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Andrei Amalrik: *Notes of a Revolutionary;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Curtis K. Stadtfeld

The tragic failure of public education in contemporary America is the deliberate exclusion of the two elements essential to individual learning and social community. The first is a sense of shock; the second is a body of shared knowledge.

Individual learning takes place for two reasons—natural curiosity and the need to know. The first readily adjusts to environment. A baby needs to know how to get itself fed, cleaned up, and held. An adolescent in an absolutely benign, undemanding environment finds that natural curiosity muted. Without a need to know, and with no demands upon them, young people become the aimless, rootless, purposeless mobs that we see on weekends roaming the shopping malls, seeking fulfillment in the things that glitter in the windows or in some imagined magical encounter. Or worse, they become those mobs roaming the centers of our inner cities, preying on the unwary or bursting into sporadic violence.

A sense of shock—a demand, if you will; some way of forcing a need, of making the individual conscious of the need to know—precedes adult learning. Without that shock or demand, we get precisely what we have for the most part in our public schools and colleges—a restless clutch of young people prepared only to go through the minimum required motions to receive the things they are told are needed to get along in the world: a high school diploma and a college degree. The fact that those two certificates represent acquisition of knowledge and skills is deemed too traumatic to be mentioned by modern educators. It is uncivil, "uncool" even, to tell teenagers that they must actually do some mental work or they will not be able to function in the world. It is unkind to fail them if they do not work. It is reactionary to insist on universal standards, much less universal language; it is repressive to fit them into any kind of mold. But it is good and decent—and liberal—to hand them along without threat or challenge, to give them a high school diploma and a college degree largely, apparently, on the basis of attendance, because, after all, who are we, the adults who made such a mess of the world, to establish standards, much less insist on them? On, rather, with the greening of America, with the third wave, with the laid-back generation. On too, at the same time, with falling levels of skills and concern, away with obligations and social cohesion, and on with the deterioration of the language to little more than a series of grunts illustrated with gestures and strewn with reassuring catch phrases like "you know?" and "OK."

I once had a black neighbor who had come out of the worst of Harlem to become a nuclear physicist; he was hard at work in the pursuit of an artificial source of energy through fusion. I asked him what broke him loose from his environment. Two things, he said: a mother who would not tolerate failure, and a personal experience of the kind that precedes all personal learning. His class was taken to a planetarium on a field trip, he recalled, and he sat through the show in total ignorance, not comprehending a single item of the information presented. He was so embarrassed by that exclusion from knowledge that he began to study astronomy, which led him to physics, which led him to a study of the atom and to a search for artificial energy which, if successful, could free us all from one of the limiting physical problems of our time.

Or listen to Canetti, recalling a similar shock of his own: in Vienna, "I stumbled upon paintings of Breughel's . . . 'The Six Blind Men' and 'The Triumph of Death.' Any blind people I subsequently saw came from the first of these paintings. The thought of blindness has haunted me since childhood, when I had been ill with measles and lost my eyesight for a few days. Now, I saw six blind men in a precipitous row, holding one another's sticks or shoulders. The first man, leading the rest, was already in the ditch . . ." And so on, through a wrenching account of the impression that those paintings made on him. Of the shock that led him

Mr. Stadtfeld is a professor of English and journalism at Eastern Michigan University.

In the Mail

***Dismay* by Eric Maisel; Maya Press; San Francisco, CA.** Indeed.

***How Philosophy Begins, The Aquinas Lecture, 1983* by Beatrice H. Zedler; Marquette University Press; Milwaukee, WI.** As the author points out, "philosophy begins in wonder." This intriguing text is therefore wonderful.

***Comedy in Space, Time, and the Imagination* by Paul H. Grawe; Nelson-Hall; Chicago, IL.** The author attempts to make up for what he calls "twenty-three centuries of mainly misdirected criticism" of comedy in some 360 pages. *That's* comedic.

***The Doughface Dilemma* or *The Invisible Slave in the American Institute's Bicentennial* by Harry V. Jaffa; The Claremont Institute; Claremont, CA.** Clear evidence that civilized disputations didn't die in the 18th century.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on to other things.

Ironic as it is, much of human progress comes from the ultimate social shock—war. Every war has accelerated scientific discovery, advanced medical knowledge, broadened social awareness of geography. By contrast, as someone once said, the Swiss have had peace and democracy for generations, and out of that era has come their major contribution to civilization—chocolate candy.

The terrible pain that is personal life in the Soviet Union is brought home almost laconically again and again by Amalrik. Returned from Siberian exile, he finds work in an information (propaganda) agency. Relations among workers there seemed:

> unconstrained and friendly. But this was only on the surface; fearful of saying too much. These journalists were also actors playing the role of ordinary men and women on one hand, while on another they were 'stalwart, uncompromising workers on the ideological front.' Yet inwardly they were not really like that, so that their lives became a kind of game in which their own personalities were gradually lost. When a person takes up a career (under those conditions), he is still a whole personality and may feel that he is happy. But as the years go by, even though he is outwardly successful and self-confident, he becomes a spiritual wreck—provided, of course, that he has an immortal soul. Many party and KGB officials, on the other hand, seem to have no soul, so that they suffer no torments, either overt or latent.

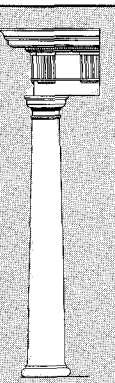
And so theirs is a society in which only those persons without souls rise to power?

Out of desperation, then, for the individual in the Soviet Union comes learning, and with learning comes frustration and rebellion for some, and in speaking out they go as a result to Siberia. For most, it is simply a retreat into vodka. What will come of those great shocks in the Soviet Union is yet to be seen. But what will come from a generation of Americans protected by a genial, ineffective educational system from any kind of demand, much less threat or shock, is largely at hand—moral values drawn from prime-time television, social values drawn from the conviviality of being "laid back," and personal values drawn from the windows in those malls.

The second ingredient in education is shared knowledge. A generation ago, nearly everyone read some of the same stories, were forced—the horror of it!—to memorize—greater horror!—certain poems, to read some history, and were directed toward certain conclusions. Were, in short, enculturated. Now, modern educators say that no judgments can be made, that no one should be forced to learn any specific thing, that memorization is no good—like diagramming sentences, it is a source of amusement among progressive educators—and that each teacher and each student should "do his own thing." And speak his own language, go his own way. The result is a society so fragmented, so aimless that it is nearly impossible to establish common points of reference without resorting to popular television. And surely a society that bases its values on such trash is in profound trouble.

Once, in an elementary literature course, I had occasion to inquire of a class if there was anyone who had not heard the tale of Jonah and the Whale. Fully half the class raised hands in ignorance.

If educators should some day discover what they knew two generations ago—that standards are needed, that enforcement of those standards is a healthy thing, and that it is useful to agree on certain information that should be shared by all—then we may find ourselves back on the track of progress. If they continue to dilute the system through misguided kindness and a lack of professional self-confidence, we will continue to have the kind of feckless public-school product that we have today. □



Justice in America

In a recent decision that "the governor's attempt to trim $9.1 million in state Medicaid reimbursements" was unconstitutional, the Federal and Cook County judiciary provided an update for the old saw, "What goes up must come down." Now what goes up must *not* come down. That there is not enough money in the treasury to provide for all the state's commitments is of no matter to the judges—they are interested only in the purity of the law. The Lord and the legislature giveth, but apparently only the Lord can taketh away.

* * *

Jim Cain, 38-year-old auto-accessories salesman, recently returned to his Seattle home to find it being burglarized by one James Keith, 20, and his teenage girl friend, who were merrily smashing, littering, and despoiling the premises. The outraged Mr. Cain tried to hold Mr. Keith at gunpoint until the police arrived. But when Keith tried to flee, Cain shot and wounded him. Legal trouble naturally followed—for Cain. The burglar has filed suit for unspecified damages because of "great pain and suffering" inflicted by the callous Mr. Cain. Though the county prosecutor's office has cleared Cain of any wrongdoing in the incident, the court nonetheless refuses to dismiss the civil suit, forcing him to spend more than $4000 in legal fees to defend himself. "How can he sue me? There's got to be something wrong with the system," says a baffled Mr. Cain, while hagiographic books on Earl Warren and his procriminal jurisprudence still pass as scripture in liberal America. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Public Purse

Yale Brozen: *Concentration, Mergers, and Public Policy;* Macmillan; New York.

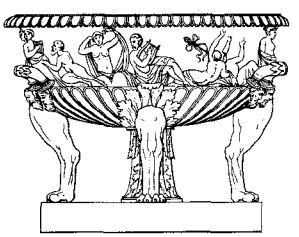
Joel Seligman: *The Transformation of Wall Street: A History of the Securities and Exchange Commission and Modern Corporate Finance;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

by Gavin D. Arbuckle

Fifty years ago Berle and Means published *The Modern Corporation,* a work that developed and justified many of the grounds for the public suspicion and fear of large corporations which characterized the years of the Great Depression. George Stigler and Claire Friedland have shown that the central propositions of that book were not supported by the statistical evidence available in the 1930's. In retrospect, it appears that the acceptance of the *The Modern Corporation's* arguments by professional economists, and their use in designing the securities acts of 1933 and 1934, was due more to a shift in intellectual fashion than to the weight of its empirical evidence. In some respects, Yale Brozen's *Concentration, Mergers, and Public Policy* is an attempt to reverse the hostile change in academic attitudes towards large businesses that occurred in the days of Berle and Means. Indeed, while reading Professor Brozen's discussions of economies of scale, rivalry between small numbers of firms, and the technological and innovative efficiencies of large enterprises, one is struck by the fact that none of his arguments would have been unfamiliar to Schumpeter, or even to pre-Depression industrial-organization economists such as Charles Van Hise.

Brozen draws upon a vast number of contemporary research articles to challenge prevailing academic analyses of the economic effects of industrial concentration. Earlier textbooks and articles tended to associate dominance of a market by a small number of large firms with tacit collusion, higher prices, the absence of competition, and overall losses of economic efficiency; Brozen cites evidence demonstrating that large firms with large shares of markets are characterized by lower costs and greater operating efficiencies than smaller firms. He even suggests that persisting large numbers of small firms in a market could, in some circumstances, be taken as an indication of an absence of vigorous competition and of inefficiently high-cost production, while an increased concentration in a market dominated by large, highly profitable firms could signal economic health and productive efficiency. These are, of course, the opposite of the expectations generated by standard industrial-organization analysis.

With regard to public policy, Brozen advocates a shift away from antitrust prosecutions based on inferences of economic inefficiency grounded in studies of market structure. He argues that the government's role should be directed at deterring explicitly anticompetitive conduct such as price-fixing. Since firms grow and gain market shares because of their efficiency rather than by conspiring against potential competitors, Brozen believes that antitrust actions preventing mergers and that forcing large firms to divest themselves of parts of their operations makes no positive contribution to economic welfare. He believes that structural barriers to entering markets tend to be ineffective in protecting high-cost producers from competition over the long run, so that market forces can be relied on to eliminate inefficient business conduct without government intervention.



Professor Brozen is not alone in taking this approach to industrial concentration. Work along this line has been appearing with increasing regularity in the academic economics journals over the past five years, particularly from University of Chicago researchers. Brozen's book draws much of this work together for the first time. In assessing the reasons for the popularity of Brozen's approach, it is tempting to assert that it is due solely to the force of his arguments. Adjusting doctrine to fit the intellectual fashion of the moment is only what one would expect of an academic indiscipline like psychology or the pseudoscience of sociology, but economists—at least outside the ranks of government consultants—like to think their views are influenced only by empirical evidence.

Professor Brozen's analysis of studies concerning the profits-concentration relationship serves to throw considerable doubt on simplistic theories inferring collusion and insulation from competition from concentrated industrial structure. But to prove that growing firms with large market shares owe their success to their efficiency in reducing costs one must look directly at cost data, and there are very few cost studies in Mr. Brozen's book. There is an excellent reason for this: relatively few cost studies have been done. Cost functions are considerably more difficult to estimate mathematically than the sort of profits-concentration relations investigated in the past. Measuring how technologically innovative and progressive an entity is proves even more difficult. One cannot say that Mr. Brozen has conclusively proven his case. Some of the

Mr. Arbuckle is an economist who writes from Madison, Wisconsin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

popularity of his approach in the academic journals must be due to factors other than the overwhelming weight of evidence behind it.

On the most mundane level, one suspects that most economics professors and graduate students were becoming intolerably bored with profits-concentration studies. Every university library in the country must have several unread theses studying profits and industrial concentration interred in a remote and unfrequented section of a dusty basement. Any new direction for research would doubtless have been welcomed. More to the point, the great mass of research criticizing government regulation in areas such as transportation, public utilities, property rights, and safety over the past 20 years may be producing a spillover effect on attitudes in other areas of economics. Continued exposure to the stream of studies presenting carefully analyzed examples of inefficient government intervention in economic activity may be creating a predisposition among economists to accept the wrongheadedness of government policy as a standard, rebuttable presumption when considering other areas—such as antitrust policy. If this is the case, Mr. Brozen may be in the forefront of a long-overdue revision of basic attitudes toward business power among academic economists. One hopes that he will not be too occupied with leading the wave of the future to estimate a few more cost functions for the next edition of his book.

Turning from the academic controversies of *Concentration, Mergers, and Public Policy* to Joel Seligman's history of the practical regulation of business by the Securities and Exchange Commission, one is struck by the contrast between the effectiveness of economists and that of securities lawyers in influencing public policy. The economists reviewed by Brozen presented, and believed they had proved, a long list of charges showing that high industrial concentration inflicted major costs on the public. Yet they were never able to introduce into public policy more than a tiny portion of the policies suggested by their theories. There was never any serious prospect that the government would begin breaking up great numbers of large firms. The securities lawyers involved in designing and operating the SEC, on the other hand, had fairly limited goals, and by and large they achieved them. As Seligman recounts in his book, the SEC decided to promote the full disclosure of relevant financial information to investors, and to leave detailed regulation of stock exchanges and dealings to various private business organizations. In doing so they seem to have avoided the twin pitfalls of regulatory agencies—neither working so closely with the regulated industries as to become entirely a servant of private interests, nor attempting to supersede management in controlling detailed business decisions.

In contrast to the continuing controversies over the most basic elements of industrial-organization theory, the basic principles of securities regulation have long been settled. Few now question the desirability of government standards governing the disclosure and reliability of financial data required by potential investors. The academic critics of other regulatory agencies have generally found little fault with the SEC.

One point stressed by Seligman is the central role of the personalities of the SEC commissioners, particularly the chairman, in determining the basic direction and vigor of commission activities. The perennial complaint of old analyses of economic regulation, that most problems could be solved simply by appointing better-qualified commissioners, has generally been discounted by more recent approaches emphasizing the inherent institutional characteristics of regulatory bodies. Seligman's enormously detailed history of the SEC underlines the continuing importance of individuals in determining the performance of organizations. □

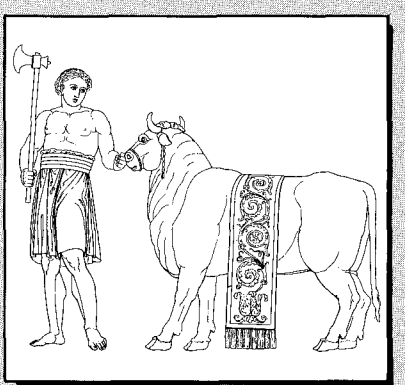
LIBERAL CULTURE

The Devil and R.R. Made Me Do It

In the days when Cotton Mather instructed colonial New England in "the wonders of the invisible world," it was not uncommon to attribute destructive and antisocial behavior to indwelling demons. In a modern America sermonized by Dan Rather et al. on the horrors of Republican economics, casuistry appears to have shifted its basis somewhat. According to a restaurant manager recently robbed in Detroit, culturally orthodox gunmen now quote the evening news when performing heists:

> He told me he was sorry . . . . Then he told me he normally wouldn't do anything like this, but Reaganomics had forced him into it.

During the Mather dynasty, Puritan congregations supported their divines because they trusted in their ability to help them overcome the Devil, but in the Rather dynasty it is the demoniacs, not the exorcists, who take collections ($900 in this case) and who inspire faith and worship. "He sounded sincere, and I believed him. Honest to God," testified the Detroit victim. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Poetic Practice

John Haffenden: *The Life of John Berryman;* Routledge & Kegan Paul; Boston.

***Working Papers: Selected Essays and Reviews by Hayden Carruth;* Edited by Judith Weissman; University of Georgia Press; Athens.**

by Thomas H. Landess

It is tempting to say that every famous man ends up with the biographer he deserves. At first glance such a generalization seems true: good men lead lives that appeal to good men; scoundrels behave in such a way as to attract the admiration of scoundrels; witty poets interest witty commentators; the dull fascinate the dull. Or so it might seem. But it just isn't so. For example, take Henry James. As a man he led a colorless and decorous existence. As a fiction writer he carefully avoided creating characters that could be understood with reference to some narrow intellectual schema, whether philosophical or psychological. Who would have predicted, then, that the telling of his life would fall to a Freudian like Leon Edel?

On the other hand, John Berryman may have gotten just what he deserved. There's slight doubt because John Haffenden's flaws as a writer may not relate directly to Berryman's flaws as a human being, but there is, I think, a connection between the two. Haffenden is not, however, a man of limited imagination, unable to grasp the full complexities of another human being. To the contrary, he seems to be a perceptive person whose imagination is equal to the task of piecing together the tissue of complicated relationships that formed Berryman's unhappy life. Generally his account is factual and detailed. The concrete stuff of the life is there: Berryman's mother-ridden childhood; his mediocre academic career, studded here and there by brilliance; his love affairs; his alcoholism, depression, and hospitalization; his literary struggles and successes; his trying friendships with other poets and critics; his final capitulation to a lifelong obsession with suicide. All of these details—many sordid, a few fascinating—are rendered with a devotion to the particularity of events that is genuine and admirable.

Of course Haffenden's narrative is heavily supplemented with interpretations of action and character. However, his glosses are seldom simplistic or unduly biased. He tries to give his reader every possible viewpoint, and he takes sides only after doing justice to all the alternatives—a rare quality in a biographer. As a result, no one is tempted to think that John Berryman was either a holy innocent or a Freudian monster. Through his penetration Haffenden has discerned a real human being—selfish, unpleasant, brilliant, entertaining, mad, maddening. Sometimes Haffenden makes this visible in his honestly conceived portrait.

The trouble with this portrait is that it is rendered in words, and Haffenden often has trouble with the English language. For instance:

> He inspired lasting and incomparable respect among many of his former students and friends, but an equal unease, if not fear, among an unlike sector of the student body who were accustomed neither to such a personality nor to the ordonnance that he practiced. . . . South Kent School, with its spartan routine of sports and studies, inhibited and humiliated him, but he took every opportunity to compensate to himself by adopting a radically different pose during the holidays. It seems altogether surprising for such a slight, studious boy who felt demoralised and grey at school, but altogether characteristic of the young Berryman, that at home he pulsated to fashion and jumped at any chance offered to flirt his person before numberless girls in the glittering promise of New York City.

One might reason that the author's insights are valuable and even accessible, despite the veil of prose behind which they hide, but does Berryman really deserve such imperfect treatment, egocentric and difficult though he may have been? In *Working Papers* Hayden Carruth suggests an answer to this question while commenting on Berryman's poetic gift, which he defines as: "His ability to wrench syntax out of every convention while remaining, though barely, within the bounds of possible grammar. He is famous for this, of course, but it has nothing whatever to do with metric, it has damned little to do with poetry in general, and I confess I see nothing else in his work." As for Berryman's use of words, Carruth speaks of the poet's "well-known colloquial cuteness," "his deliberate archaisms, inversions, the use of fusty words like 'moot' and 'plaint,' " "Archness, what we used to call sophomorism," and his "verbal *bizarrerie*." Like subject, like biographer? I suspect that Haffenden was heavily under Berryman's influence during the time he was writing, and as a consequence he adopted some of the same tricks. Thus Berryman does get the biographer he deserves after all—that is, if Carruth's appraisal of Berryman's poetry is sound.

"[T]his excellent and harrowing account of John Berryman's life . . . is very much to John Haffenden's credit."

—*The New Republic*

Professor Landess is on leave from the University of Dallas.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And on such subjects Carruth is generally very sound. In fact, his new collection of criticism goes far to prove what many people have long suspected: that he is perhaps one of our best contemporary critics of poetry. Carruth's reviews are—with one or two exceptions—genuine essays which say something significant about some of the most important poets of our time. Moreover, in many instances he uses the occasion of his reviews to comment on the larger movements in 20th-century poetry and to define the essential nature of the artistry and craft of verse. Thus he is both specific in focus and broad in implication. Yet what is most impressive is Carruth's use of language—his clear, unimpeachable prose which, by its own integrity, argues strongly for the truth of his critical insights. In many ways the most difficult problem for the reviewer of poetry is finding a critical diction. After all, a perceptive reader's response to a poem is complicated and hard to express in words. Consequently, too many commentators take the easy way out by resorting to vague and breathless rhetoric advertising their own cleverness and sensitivity but saying nothing very instructive or concrete about what they've read: "Mr. So-and-So's poetry is redolent with the splendor of life itself, with the deep and abiding mystery of what is lovely and human and perishable and, finally, true."

A little of what Carruth says *sounds* like that, but a close examination of his language reveals it as something slightly different and much more exact in its meaning. For example: "Certainly the poet is motivated by a concern and awareness that far transcend his private circumstances, and certainly his poem is tied very closely to the state of American society. It is a beautiful poem, a convincing poem, and a poem of manifold cultural and social uses." In this summary of his reaction to William Carlos Williams's *Paterson*, Carruth is dealing with the larger range and sensibilities of the poet, but his usual preoccupation is with diction and syntax or meter and rhythm, the essential things that distinguish genuine poetry.

Of course, Carruth himself is a poet who understands what it means to be inside the poem looking out, rather than vice versa; such a perspective is not absolutely necessary to a good critic, but it helps him to get to important matters more quickly and unerringly. Also, as a result of wrestling with the language of verse himself, Carruth is probably more aware of the sea change that has taken place in poetry since the early 1950's, when, according to some critics, the diction and syntax of poetry suddenly, orgasmically relaxed and the Age of Eliot came to an overdue end. Carruth sensed the necessity for such a change even before the popular success of the Beats, as did other established poets such as Berryman, Lowell, and Robert Penn Warren. As early as the late 1940's Carruth began to consider the dangers and possibilities of a new poetic style, and many of these essays are concerned with such theoretical problems as they reveal themselves in the specific poems of specific poets. For example, in reviewing Wallace Stevens he shows himself sympathetic with the best impulses in 20th-century "modernism," and he is hard on some of the newer voices: "Mr. Ferlinghetti claims to write for the street, in the language of the street, yet you can hear on any street in this country language more beautifully and meaningfully and vigorously cadenced than this, even taking into consideration the

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

The Rockford Institute presents the latest two additions to its Occasional Papers series.

6 **"The Family and the Free Economy"**

"Capitalism *needs* the family. For the family transforms the base motivations and values of capitalism into socially constructive and metaphysically meaningful ends."

The editor of *Persuasion At Work*, Dr. Allan C. Carlson, argues that the nation's economic difficulties and social difficulties may be the same problem.

7 **"America's Secret Life-Giving Weapon: Observations on the Nuclear Freeze"**

"It is the restrained and considerate behavior defined by the ideals of freedom that makes for peaceful relationships in a family, a neighborhood, a city, or a world."

Dr. John A. Howard, president of The Rockford Institute, identifies a surer road to peace than the popularized nuclear freeze.

Available for 35¢ apiece from The Rockford Institute
934 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

porcine discontinuity of most American discourse." Yet he also shows a measured sympathy for Karl Shapiro's attack on the moderns, despite his rejection of Shapiro's idea that poetry (and poets) should be antirational. And in a fine tribute to Conrad Aiken he joins the attack on the sterile and loveless verse of the latter-day modernists, while commending those who are seeking a newer and more vital language (e.g., Denise Levertov and Robert Creeley).

Hayden Carruth apparently likes every kind of poetry except that which is demonstrably bad, and he spends much of his time in this volume separating the graceful and durable from the facile and mundane in 20th-century poetry. For that, as well as for the beauty and precision of his prose, *Working Papers* is noteworthy. □

Food for Memory

Richard Brautigan: *So the Wind Won't Blow It All Away;* Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence; New York.

Richard Sennett: *The Frog Who Dared to Croak;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Will Morrisey

The first-person narrative form in 20th-century fiction often asserts individualism while undercutting it. Although it is quickly clear who this "I" wants the reader to believe he is, few fail, in the end, to see who he really is. What isn't always apparent is what the author thinks, or believes, about his narrator's seeming and being. By refusing to judge explicitly, many modern novelists and poets depend on their readers' ability to find a constellation of meaning beyond the narrative's landscape—beyond the individual portrayed. Even in this irreligious time we have some idea of Dante's meaning, but what will readers make of James Joyce six centuries after his death? Joyce himself identified an immediate need for literary archaeologists to interpret his books.

The current literary situation mirrors the familiar political tension between liberty—an assertion of individuality—and authority—the embodiment of meaning. In modern times especially, individuals resent authority but find themselves diminished when it is destroyed. They often get the worst of both: individualism for Stalin, tyranny for the Russians; or, alternatively, anarchy for the many and subservience for the few. Brautigan explores liberty in America. Sennett explores tyranny in Hungary and the Soviet Union. Both use first-person narrators, and both pose the problems individualism causes.

Brautigan's middle-aged narrator remembers the summer of 1947, when he was 12 years old and "the most interesting thing happening in his life" was watching a husband and wife who fished in a pond while sitting in their living-room furniture, carefully trucked out and unloaded each evening at seven. Imitating their deliberateness, he intersperses his description of one afternoon spent waiting for them with memories of his childhood, culminating in the day his "childhood ended"—when he accidentally shot and killed a friend.

The reviewer for the *New York Times* could find no purpose for this procedure, but the narrator explains it simply enough: "I am still searching for some meaning in the story and perhaps even a partial answer to my own life, which as I grow closer and closer to death, the answer gets farther and farther away." Hence the attempt to reverse aging by the means of memory, to recapture childhood, the time when truth seems closer—not only for Wordsworth's famous reason but because an adult can see "unknown vectors" the child did not see. Brautigan does this well. He remembers the boredom of childhood. His cuteness, which has irritated more than one reader of his other novels, here contributes to a story that does not omit childhood's childishness. Children ponder lying and truth-telling, fantasy and reality, with an intensity most will lose in adulthood; Brautigan knows something of how these intertwine. So, for example, he has his narrator remember the "very ancient and fragile" lock on an old woman's garage door:

> The lock was only a symbol of privacy and protection, but that meant something in those days. If that lock were around today, a thief would just walk up to it and blow it off with his breath.

The narrator remembers these things "so the wind"—today's prevailing viciousness, a sort of realism—"won't blow it all away." His memories recapture not only childhood but the more humane minds of that time and place—the American Northwest a couple of years after World War II, "before television crippled the imagination of America and turned people indoors and away from living out their own fantasies with dignity." This isn't quite as sentimental as it sounds; lonely children who spend their days watching, not participating, often find their way to the eccentric adults (mostly old people—old age is a form of eccentricity) who have time for them. The narrator draws these portraits with a bright child's mixture of sarcasm, curiosity, and fondness.

Brautigan has never offered any but the simplest ideas, and his sentiments —the mixture of satire and sympathy Christianity becomes when secularized —recall Dickens (as do his congruent fascinations for eccentrics and children). His style is from Hemingway. The tone belongs to Brautigan, and it is what makes him a most elusive writer. He is

Mr. Morrisey is the author of Reflections on DeGaulle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LIBERAL CULTURE

The Bottom Line

Financiers and their like have always been popularly perceived as a cold-blooded, thick-skinned group: think of Shylock. According to a recent news report, a 29-year-old stockbroker, a mother of two, decided, thanks to a suggestion from her husband, to quash this stereotype —and achieve a hefty return-on-investment at the same time. The entrepreneur, Marina Verola of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, appeared in the March 1983 issue of *Playboy* in outfits not recommended in *Dress for Success*. She gained more than $12,000. During a New York press conference Mrs. Verola reportedly said, "I'm in the public eye now . . . but I prefer to bank on my brains, not my looks." She added, "We must maintain the conservative image of Wall Street." One suspects that the brains upon which Mrs. Verola banks are not found where they're usually located. □

straightforward enough. The narrator remembers his childhood recreation of shooting apples in an abandoned orchard. He bought the bullet that killed his friend because he preferred the "dramatic" sound of "a .22 bullet turning an apple into instant rotten apple sauce" to the satisfaction of eating a hamburger in the restaurant next to the gun shop; he had only enough money for one or the other. He identifies bullets with "aggressions," hamburgers with the pleasant eccentricity of the married couple ("Take it nice and easy is my motto," the husband says while cooking one). Brautigan surely thinks of this homey dichotomy as a choice Americans always have before them, and he leaves no doubt that he prefers hamburgers.

After the shooting, his narrator developed a sad/comic obsession with hamburgers ("I was a weird kid," he concedes; "weird" derives from a word that meant fate, "unknown vectors"):

> Looking back on it now, I guess I used the hamburger as a form of mental therapy to keep from going mad because what happened in that orchard was not the kind of thing that causes a child to have *a positive outlook on life*. It was the kind of thing that *challenged your mettle* and I used the hamburger as my *first line of defense*. (Emphasis added.)

This satirical counterpointing of guilt with scoutmaster understatement-by-cliche must leave many readers strewn like apples shot by a weird kid. The problem of tone reveals the problem of meaning. The whole account sidesteps the fact that the accident could have been prevented had the boy known not to fire a gun if his friend could be standing in the bullet's trajectory. The narrator never considers this, his imagination obscuring common sense even after 32 years. What of Brautigan?

One can't know. Whatever Brautigan may think of his narrator, the tone provides contrary signals, or signals one can interpret variously with equal justification. Like his narrator, Brautigan enjoys individuality, liberty, but not the responsibility they force upon us. That goes for imagination as well as for action. He detests the mass imagination of today, preferring the time when "people made their own imagination, like home-cooking." The result was more palatable, perhaps, because however dotty or injurious it was still on a human scale. But to what extent can an individual really make his own imagination? Brautigan will not or cannot delineate the limits, or the complementary extent to which one must take his bearings from things beyond himself. Responsibility, which must be *to* something, or someone, arises there; Brautigan eludes it.

Brautigan presents the world of preadolescence, omitting sexuality, that complication of love and friendship. Sennett, in his imaginary memoir of a Hungarian philosophy teacher named Tibor Grau, devotes only a few pages to childhood, many more to youth and adulthood. Sexuality and politics matter here. The notion that sexuality has to do with liberty could be the reigning illusion of today. Despite illustrated instruction manuals and copious experiences, many still contrive to overlook the fact that sexual activity involves physical linkage—however various—and not unrestricted movement. As an act of liberation, "sex" must disappoint. Reportedly, it often does.

Tibor Grau does not share this illusion. Resented by his public-school classmates for his superior wealth and intelligence, he wanted "to have them, to conquer them"; his sexuality was based not on the illusion of sexual liberation but on the illusion that one's enemies are worth "having," an egalitarian presumption that lies beneath much of what passes for power-hungry elitism. After moving from teenage schoolboys to young, displaced peasants who frequented Budapest's Municipal Park, Grau's "first steps" toward Marxism came, he explains, "when I began to feel such love for some of the older boys that I wanted to stop paying them, imagining that they would freely return my feelings." They didn't, of course, and Grau learned early "how sordid life is," and "how sad and impossible it is to live."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Evidently, life owes its sordidness, sadness, and impossibility to the rarity of concurring love, liberty, and sexuality. Liberty in particular causes the young to be "confused and afraid, as they should be." "To avoid the terrifying solitude of liberty," they "search to find a realm of life in which they can immediately belong." Grau sought love and friendship among the poor, sharing their "anger and hatred against the world." Even in old age, as he writes this memoir, he imagines "hatred of the world as it is" to be "the noblest emotion an adolescent can feel."

Resentment and love of love mix easily; the combination is poisonous. This is shown when Grau remembers becoming a deputy director of "Cultural Propaganda" in Hungary's short-lived socialist regime of 1919. With the rather heavy irony that totalitarianism provokes, Sennett delineates how this poison causes suspicion, betrayal, and lying, not fraternal struggle for truth against shared enemies. Most insightfully, he has Grau write that he foolishly resisted what turned out to be a routine inquiry not only because he suspected a conspiracy but also because he wanted to assert his liberty; he did not want to be forced into writing an apologia. Sennett knows that the problem of liberty would remain even if we solved the "problems of scarcity," economic and emotional, which socialists believe they can do. Grau reflects that socialism asks and promises too much because "no one can give another more than permission to exist, and that permission entails all manner of mistakes, stupidities, and waywardness." Evil is the denial of this permission, a denial made by too many frustrated—and fraudulent—socialists. The existence Grau praises, moderately, is not *mere* life; "to live is to love something concrete for itself," he writes—mixing Kant's categorical imperative with Marx's materialism, and hoping to avoid the worst aspects of both.

Sennett has Grau survive some 15 years in Stalinist Russia. He gives him an elderly male lover with whom to spend his last years in Hungary; justifiably embarrassed by this bluebird finale, he has Grau write defensively:

> I know what you will say: Grau, such a self-absorbed, unpleasant man before, now redeemed. You really understand nothing. I simply have something to do. This life has formed for me those habits of small pleasures each day which the young would call the prison of old age.

The point seems to be that the love of something (or someone) for itself is true liberty. It is surely closer to true liberty than either utopian socialism or Marxist "realism." But Grau overlooks something: throughout, he describes himself as a philosopher. However, a real philosopher, Socrates, insisted that loving wisdom differs from loving another human being. As long as he retains his wits, a philosopher always has "something to do." Grau doesn't know this, so he remains an intellectual, not a philosopher at all.

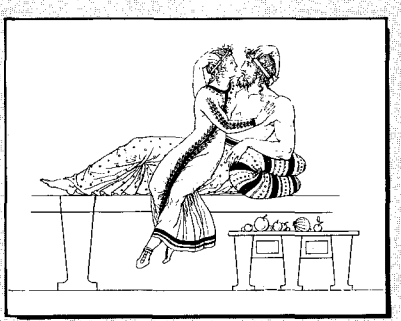
What of Sennett? He is less elusive than Brautigan; I suspect that he does not know the difference either.

The modern individualist recognizes no authority. Yet he often finds his quest to satisfy mere appetites unsatisfying in the end. With no faith in reason or revelation, he can turn only to memory. Not itself authoritative, memory can recreate some old authority. Remembered authority stands against the rapid changes of democracy or the equally rapid but more brutal changes of totalitarianism. Brautigan's narrator attempts to find authority in childhood, rather like an American Rousseau. Sennett's narrator "weeds his memories . . . to clarify and refine his understanding," yielding a materialist Kantianism. The procedures differ, but both men look to the modern substitute for reason and revelation: sentiment. Unfortunately, sentiment's multifariousness equals or exceeds that of reason, or perhaps even that of revelation. As a substitute for other forms of authority, it is insufficiently authoritative. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

The Computerized Parlor

Meeting people in person is always a messy business, especially for wallflowers and misanthropes. But high technology has leaped into the breach. Indeed, said a primate keeper at a Chicago zoo about her attitude before using her home computer, "I was fonder of Sinbad (the zoo's 500-pound gorilla) than of most people I knew." Lemuel Gulliver could have appreciated the woman's state of mind. The woman, who code-named herself "Zebra 3" (after a striped Houyhnhnm?), communicated to others across the country through a computer program called "CB Similator." Through it she "met" a New Yorker who later said, "I didn't even know Zebra 3 was a woman." A marriage—presumably to be conducted in English, not BASIC—is planned. While this modern, asexual approach to courting is somehow disturbing, it does have a salutary effect on the nation's health. That is, how many cruisers in singles' bars—every night—say "the thing that is not" about the virus known as herpes? □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bricks, Mortar & Touchstones

Amitai Etzioni: *An Immodest Agenda: Rebuilding America Before the Twenty-First Century*; McGraw-Hill; New York.

by David R. Sands

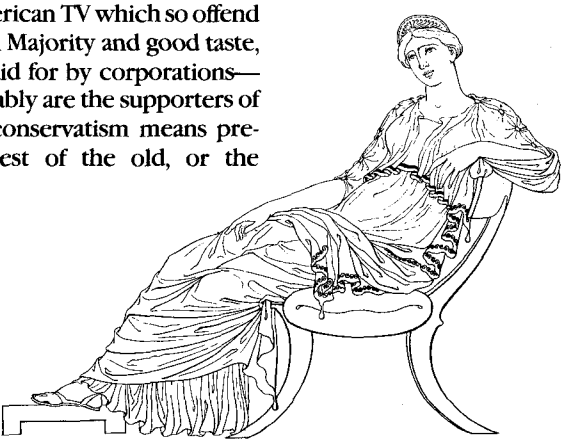
Despite all the talk about neo-liberalism, it appears that the central intellectual debate in American politics today is taking place within the Republican Party, between two very distinct notions of conservatism. The Reagan triumph of 1980 clarified the debate without settling the fundamental issues. The impulse to "get the government off of our backs," while commendable given the social policies in this country over the past two decades, is just that—an impulse, not a coherent political philosophy. It presupposes that there is a vast network of private charity and local initiative waiting "out there" somewhere to take over what we have grown accustomed to letting the Federal government do for us. The grounds for this presupposition are by no means obvious. In fact, conservatives themselves have been most critical of many of the prominent social trends of postwar America—the decline of the family, the celebration of various forms of hedonism, the impatience for gratification, the disregard for traditional arbiters of taste and authority, in short, modern amoral individualism. One has to wonder whether Social Security should be given into the hands of a populace that made *Pulling Your Own Strings* a best-seller.

One prominent school of conservatives, which follows the tenets of classical 19th-century economic liberalism, sees these qualms as irrelevant. The government, for them, is a mischievous nanny skewing the marketplace with regulations or formulating inane policies that interfere with the traditional family. But for Reaganomics, the New Federalism, or a restoration of familial and civic virtues ever to take hold, a different definition of conservatism must prevail. It must be that of an 18th-century cultural conservatism which places the moral soundness of the community above the leading economic indicators and certainly above most of the traditional liberal criteria for political health, i.e., individual moral autonomy or radical egalitarianism. George Will, one defender of the latter brand of conservatism, writes that "statecraft must be soulcraft; government cannot avoid concerning itself with morals." He decries "the modern 'nightwatchman' theory of government," which "exists only to protect persons and property." These conservatives are willing to give the market the benefit of a large doubt, and they do not underrate the virtues—a work ethic, deferred gratification, individual initiative—that capitalism promotes. However, nor do they see the unfettering of economic activity as the right's primary mission.

Indeed, an argument can be made for the idea that capitalism and capitalists are not necessarily conservative forces at all, that it is only an accident of coalition-building and political style that has placed the National Association of Manufacturers under the Republican banner. The tease and gore broadcast nightly on American TV which so offend both the Moral Majority and good taste, after all, are paid for by corporations—which presumably are the supporters of capitalism. If conservatism means preserving the best of the old, or the extreme reluctance to embrace the untried, then how can a system of economic organization that brought us the time clock, the factory, the automobile, and the video arcade be conservative?

All of which leads to Amitai Etzioni's important and provocative *An Immodest Agenda: Rebuilding America Before the Twenty-first Century*. It is due more to the confusion of our politics than to any gross inconsistency in Etzioni's thinking that makes this book difficult to label. A social scientist at the George Washington University, Etzioni comes from a most unpromising background, having served stints as a guest scholar at the Brookings Institute and as a senior advisor to Jimmy Carter for one year. He is a Democrat, and he sees his book as a blueprint for a revival of his party's fortunes.

But he pays conservatives the compliment of accepting their definition of the issues, of allowing the right to choose both the battleground and the weapons. There are certain values, he argues, which a healthy America must cultivate and which liberalism has been too embarrassed or distracted to address in recent years. "The Moral Majority has a point; we must concern ourselves more with family, school, neighborhood, nation, and character," Etzioni states.



Mr. Sands is a recent graduate of Tufts University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Between the government and the individual must come the mediating structures of family and community. Liberalism has resorted to undemocratic, coercive methods to further its ambitions—primarily through sympathetic courts and activists within the Federal bureaucracy. Etzioni applauds Mr. Reagan's efforts to get the government out of our hair, but we must also make certain that the community can handle the responsibilities it is being given.

Etzioni's three touchstones for public virtue are mutuality, civility, and rationality in production. He discusses each at length, but the list boils down to those attributes which will best preserve the traditional family, the community, and the prosperity of the economy. He stresses discipline, both in the schools and in the home, and respect for the traditional institutions of society, from marriage to the courts. He rejects the new-left dismissal of material prosperity and rightly notes that a consuming concern for the "quality of life" over hard work and prudent consumption will rapidly lower the quality of life for all. From this analysis flow several concrete proposals that the new right and cultural conservatives in general should find congenial. Parental authority should be reestablished. Divorce should be much harder to obtain. Schools should assign heavier workloads and move to instill a deeper sense of self-discipline rather than devoting so much energy to rootless encouragement of the young person's creativity that modern pedagogy dearly loves. Laws must be strictly enforced in order to establish a climate of civic responsibility and respect for the law. The government must move to prevent legalistic gambits from hobbling worthwhile economic development. Etzioni even approves of the spirit behind the Reagan tax cuts of 1981. He looks to credit controls and tax incentives to reindustrialize, to rebuild our stock of capital goods, and to promote the research and development of new technologies.

Etzioni is at times a little severe on the rascalities and minor rule-bendings that give a tang to politics and to human intercourse in general. This is understandable; agenda-setters from Plato on have always been something of a killjoy at times. What is less clear is why Etzioni, while freely conceding that reestablishing traditional moral authority is vital to America's recovery, is so hostile to the whole spectrum of conservative thinkers, who have been arguing the same position for so long. Etzioni offers a conservative diagnosis and then looks to the liberals to implement the cure. The Moral Majority's solutions, he explained in a recent interview, are "technically incompetent, by which I mean that if you would do to perfection what they asked for—if there wouldn't be a single abortion, if pornography would be banned and burned and if they hanged criminals twice a month—that would do nothing to make people into religious beings, law-abiding, moral people. We have plenty of data to show that."

That last line exposes the sociologist in Etzioni—using a poll to make a philosophical point. But there is a deeper problem with this analysis. Etzioni claims that these measures are insufficient for a proper society but does not prove that they are unnecessary for one. Restoring moral order means giving more power to parents, teachers, ministers, etc. Etzioni seems to believe that the problem is more easily surmountable than his data would have one believe. He sees modern American society fairly clearly, but he shrinks from its logical implications. Creating a climate of civility, mutuality, and rationality is not a task for the fainthearted, for it demands reversing a society-wide tendency toward license. This is an age when a meteoric rise in teenage pregnancies can be called an "epidemic," a time of distressing retreats from moral responsibility. The author is to be commended for a penetrating analysis of what ails America. If he only knew who his true friends are. □

Send for your complimentary copy of The Rockford Institute's Annual Report featuring the work of the eminent artist and designer Warren Chappell.

Mail this coupon to:
The Rockford Institute
934 North Main Street
Rockford, IL 61103

Name

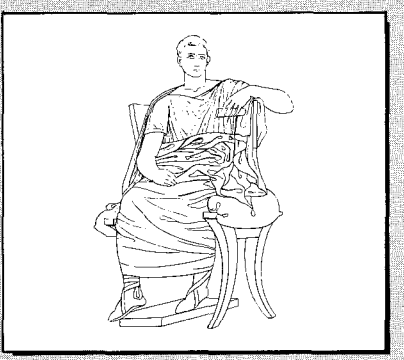
Address

City State Zip

LIBERAL CULTURE

As Perceptive As Ever

Kurt Vonnegut recently told the London Sunday *Observer* that "American literary careers are very short." The alleged heir of Mark Twain doesn't seem to be aware of the facts: that his mentor published for over 40 years, that Edith Wharton managed to produce for 38, that William Carlos Williams put in over 40 years while simultaneously practicing medicine—and that this list could continue on to an embarrassing length. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENDABLES

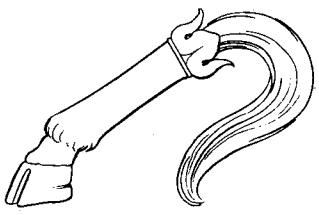
Building a Better Fingernail File

Trevor I. Williams: *A Short History of Twentieth-Century Technology c. 1900-c. 1950;* Oxford University Press; New York.

A low-budget TV commercial often shown during late shows touts the advantages of becoming a computer programmer. The ad—a technological extension of the matchbook cover that heralds home-study courses in electronics—features a man who says he wanted a job wherein he wouldn't get his "fingernails dirty." He walks through a room full of processors; a slight hum from the whirring tapes and the air-filtration system can be heard. The man leaves the building and hops into a Corvette, a remarkable auto inasmuch as its body is made of glass filaments in a resin matrix, not of high-strength, low-alloy steel from a rolling mill. The commercial ends with a telephone number that can be dialed or punched, a procedure quite unlike that needed to operate the telephone-like device invented by a German, Johann P. Reis, in 1860. (Bell patented his device in the U.S. in 1876.) The telephone approach to obtaining information is almost an order-of-magnitude leap beyond the matchbook approach, which requires tools including a ballpoint pen (introduced by a Hungarian, Georg Biro, in 1938), an envelope, and a postal service. The telephone's support system is much more complex but essentially invisible. It, too, is becoming Corvette-like, as fiber optics replace metal phone lines.

The history of technology—throughout the ages, but particularly in the 20th century—can be characterized as being an attempt at preventing the soiling of fingernails. Work, that which technology attempts to alleviate, didn't exist before the Fall; Adam and Eve puttered around uninhibitedly in the Garden, presumably trimming and pruning as a hobby. There was no perspiration beading on their brows. Man has been trying to return to that state ever since. The best that can be achieved, of course, is one wherein man is clean, at least physically; the story of the effects of technology on the soul remains to be told.

Consider dirt. Once, farmers, essentially, lived in it. Many—but a decreasing number—still do. The family farm is being replaced by the "more efficient" agribusiness. The horse's place was usurped by the tractor; the tractor's place has been filled by something that is still called a tractor, but which has all of the accoutrements of a loaded Cadillac, from tinted glass and air conditioning to multiplex stereo. Not only does the operator of the vehicle stay clean, but it is hard to imagine the shiny surface of the exterior soiled. Consider textures. Wood has given way to metal, which has given way to polymers. Wool and leather have been replaced by polyesters and ultrasuede. Smooth or smoother



surfaces are perceived as being clean; paper towels don't work well on rough surfaces. The future (think of *Star Trek*) will be unwrinkled. Today, buildings for housing perma-press-clothed employees—not workers—are generally built with sealed windows for the sake of the heating and cooling systems. No longer can the maintenance engineer (formerly the janitor) be called to go below to check the boiler: temperature control is conducted from a remote location, tied into the building thanks to microprocessor technology. This setup is a part of the energy-conservation push, a program wherein "clean" forms of energy are being sought.

A picture that emerges in Trevor I. Williams's laudable history (which is long enough to provide an adequate overview of technology in his given time frame and brief enough to be actually read through and not merely consulted like an encyclopedia) is one wherein self-sufficiency and self-reliance become impossible. The complexity of things—TV's, Corvettes, double-knit leisure suits—gives rise to experts, who are then organized into bureaucracies. People, individuals, moral impulses? Such concerns sink under the weight of cost-effective structures. Those who aren't currently talking about the "reindustrialization" of America are talking about "post-industrial" America. If the latter are correct—and the number of products manufactured in Japan, Korea, etc. indicate that they are—then service industries will be key in the U.S. The result will be that the 21st century will be given over to bureaucrats, planners, technicians, and manicurists. The effects of this on enduring—not economic—human values must be sought out, described, and addressed lest man become belittled by what he has wrought. (GSV) □

IN FOCUS

The Counseling Racket

William Safire & Leonard Safir: *Good Advice;* Times Books; New York.

Helen Gurley Brown: *Having It All: Love-Success-Sex-Money . . . Even If You're Starting With Nothing;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

There is at least one—and usually more—volume of advice on the bookstore shelves to solve virtually every difficulty known to mankind. One may learn how to: get through high school, find a job, dress for success, parent, pull one's own strings, cope with midlife crises, etc., etc., etc. Messrs. Safir[e] apparently thought that was not enough; they have collected the essence of all that advice between just two covers by way of pithy quotations from both the living and the dead and organized it into alphabetized categories. The categories, of course—loyalty, luck, patriotism, revenge, sex, temptation, trust, etc.—have been with us always. The quotes have been around a while, too. Many of them are from such venerable personages as Lord Acton, Aesop, St. Augustine, Beethoven, Ambrose Bierce, Edmund Burke, Jesus Christ, etc. And since eclecticism has become a virtue, to balance the sages Messrs. Safir[e] have included dimwits ranging

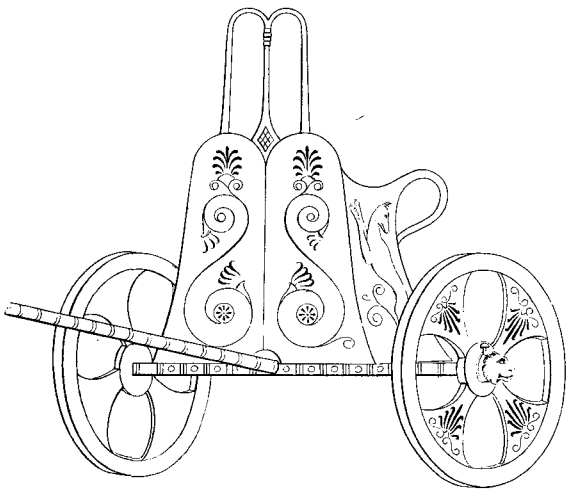
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from Letitia Baldridge to Bill Blass, from Joyce Brothers to Alan Alda and Johnny Carson, thereby achieving a perfect democracy of minds. The advice of the first group has been many times recorded; that of the second is bleated frequently from *People* and *New York* magazine, and others of their ilk. So why still another tome on the subject?

One of the advice-givers in *Good Advice* is Helen Gurley Brown (listed twice, under "Relationships (Man/Woman)" and "Sex"), who now offers her own advice book, *Having It All.* Mrs. Brown is the editor of *Cosmopolitan,* a monthly publication that further delineates how to arrange one's life in keeping with the platitudes of fashion. She seems to combine the characteristics of a hard worker, a gold digger, and an enthusiastic proponent of random mating. Mrs. Brown calls this sort of person a "mouseburger" and has aimed her advice at all the little mouseburgers out there panting to make it big just like she did. For the uninitiated, a mouseburger (according to the author) is: smart, sensitive, intuitive, modest, envious, selfish, has "a sweet natural sex drive," is eccentric, ambitious, uncasual, and one who "wants it all and is 'willing to pay the price.'" Mrs. Brown's comments on currently commendable work ethics are: "Do more than your share in that job. Study. Inch along . . . Success is the day-to-day goodness you keep turning in. . . . As for not sleeping with the boss, why discriminate against *him?* It's like sleeping with anybody else . . ."

According to the guru of mouseburgers, there are five perfectly legitimate kinds of sex: magic sex; intimate, comfortable sex; friendly sex; casual sex; and scruffy sex. Included in her information are such topics as: "Help for the Non-Orgasmic," "To Fake or Not to Fake," "Never Underestimate C—— Power," "How to Go Down on a Man." Predictably, she comes out squarely in favor of extramarital affairs, one-night stands, masturbation, and promiscuity. Hers is a time-honored subethical principle: if it feels good, do it. However, if there's anything in it for you, do it even if it doesn't feel good. In other times, the same approach to life and oneself was called whoredom.

Helen Gurley Brown uses her books and her magazine to promote her values. She herself is a success story. She has it all. How pitiful that her all is so little and so malodorous. No amount of perfume advertised in *Cosmopolitan* can mask the stench.



Waste of Money

Tin Soldiers

William Wharton: *A Midnight Clear;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Mark G. Michaelsen

When William Wharton burst on the literary scene in 1979 with his debut novel *Birdy,* enlightened critics babbled their approval. Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, this book recounted the labors of a young man suffering from delusions of birdhood and his unrequited bestial love for his pet canary. An unnoteworthy second novel followed. Wharton's latest novel is rife with allusions to *All Quiet on the Western Front;* idealistic babes in arms revenge themselves upon a tyrannical drill instructor, face the horrors of war, and ponder their roles as pawns in a global chess game. However, the connections in *A Midnight Clear* are painful, not praiseworthy, as they emphasize the deficiencies of Wharton's work. There are, however, some creative ideas in the book, though they are hidden among the jangle of improbable action and implausible dialogue.

The plot is as follows. Late in World War II a German reconnaissance squad, weary of six years of combat on two fronts, decides to surrender to their American counterparts rather than risk death in battle or, worse, capture by the Soviets. Surrender is not so easy, though; the *Wehrmacht* is girding for a major counterthrust and the patrol's disappearance will not go unnoticed. The American patrol may not be able to escort them safely to the rear. This could have become an exciting, engaging wartime novel. Wharton instead has burdened it with so much psychological baggage that it collapses under the load.

Led by 19-year-old Sergeant Will Knott (Whartonesque humor), the five-man team of young American soldiers is preoccupied with bridge, theological sophism, and wry banter. So much effort is spent sketching the personalities of the unit that what little excitement the book's action might provide is lost. Rather than dispatch an emissary under a truce flag, the Germans signal their intentions through subtler means: whispering greetings in the night, building scarecrows ridiculing Hitler, and finally presenting the Americans with a small Christmas tree hung with candles, paper stars, and fruit. An elaborate scheme for their surrender after a phony firefight is arranged but frustrated because one American is not told the plan for reasons too absurd to relate. It would all be tragic, as Wharton intended, if it weren't so bad.

Young warriors wizen quickly amid carnage in Remarque's epic work. Wharton's characters never grow up; war is a mere sideshow to their psychological circus. Like Remarque's, Wharton's characters question the morality of their cause. *A Midnight Clear*'s message—that war could be avoided if idealistic youth, not statesmen, ran the world—rings rather hollow against the setting of a war against tyranny. □

Mr. Michaelsen is special assistant for corporate affairs at Hillsdale College.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Having It Neither Way

Irwin Shaw: *Acceptable Losses;* Arbor House; New York.

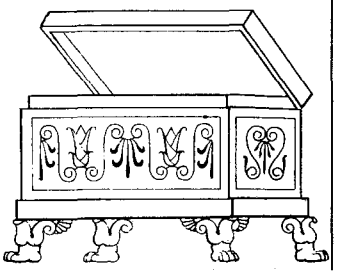
by Allen Brodsky

Irwin Shaw has caught himself in a bind. He wants his novels to have mass appeal, so he adorns his characters and plots with adolescent fantasies. Mild-mannered men are incredibly attractive to beautiful women and have affairs with one glamorous beauty after another. Shaw's heroes are often men who obtain sexual pleasures and material wealth to fantastic degrees with little, if any, exertion. The protagonist of *Acceptable Losses* is typical. He is married to a juvenile's dream of the perfect wife: a sexy woman who gladly takes care of all her husband's needs and who never hassles him, no matter how many other women he sleeps with.

But Shaw also wants his novels to express serious themes, so he presents a world that is often brutal and unfair. Although *Acceptable Losses* is set in contemporary peacetime America, the novel suggests that men are still in a state of war with one another. Apparently the point is that violence and anger are permanent parts of man's nature, so we need to find ways of living with them instead of pretending they don't exist. The novel implies that the wartime notion of acceptable losses holds for peacetime as well. In other words, one must struggle to succeed. This is less than an original theme, but it is a salutary one, and one that is expressed infrequently in public discourse. Television shows and much current fiction express the opposite view: the world owes you everything you want, and more. The bind for Shaw is that the two sides of his work contradict each other. A hero who is half adolescent male fantasy and half representation of traditional American values (even though a simplistic representation) is incoherent. The fantasy side of Shaw's works contributes to their popularity, but it strips the force from his themes.

Mr. Brodsky writes from Philadelphia.

The reason for the cross-eyed quality of Shaw's fiction is his limited understanding of art, evidenced by some thoughts about Aristotle that improbably appear in *Acceptable Losses.* To gain some respite from his worries about a stranger's threats, the hero takes his wife out to see a film. They find the film deeply moving, and the protagonist is impressed by the director's ability to bring the audience to tears: "Catharsis through pity and terror, he thought." But the hero goes on to oppose the fiction with the reality of his life. That is, he carries a list of possible enemies, about which he thinks, "that was reality, not the formula for pre-Christian Greek playwrights; there was terror . . . in his pocket, but no pity and no catharsis." This is a false opposition. The *Poetics* argues that catharsis arises from the skillful representation of reality. Indeed, the example Shaw uses to illustrate his point, the Australian film *'Breaker' Morant,* is based on real people and real events. (Morant is an Australian hero.) Shaw does not realize that he can move his readers and gain a large audience by writing well about reality, rather than by sneaking his view of life between insipid fantasies. In the best fiction, theme is effect deepened; after all, life has meaning. □



Nonsense for Nonsexists

***Stories for Free Children;* Edited by Letty Cottin Pogrebin;** McGraw-Hill; New York.

"My first and last philosophy, that which I believe in with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery," wrote G. K. Chesterton. "I generally learnt it from a nurse; that is, from the solemn and star-appointed priestess at once of democracy and tradition. The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are things called fairy tales." Nor is Chesterton the only one to understand that a culture's fairy tales and legends, despite their seemingly fabulous elements, provide a profound education for children in a folk wisdom accrued through generations and history. Bruno Bettelheim argues in *The Uses of Enchantment* that such stories provide an invaluable emotional and imaginative preparation for a world really inhabited by various sorts of trolls, ogres, giants, and witches—as well as by shining knights and beautiful princesses. The value of this folklore, Bettelheim warned, is greatly diminished, however, when "unpleasant" elements are expunged. Children must learn that giants *do* eat people and that dragons do more than singe the eyebrows of unsuccessful warriors. Unfortunately, the aim of *Ms.* magazine and its editor Ms. Pogrebin in compiling *Stories for Free Children* is precisely to shield children from a most "unpleasant" feature of traditional children's stories, their pervasive "sexism." So instead of a daring prince rescuing a fair damsel, we have a very tall princess who "stands on her own two feet" as she looks down at a short, thin, and "elegant" prince with "large brown eyes." Instead of the couple who marry and live happily ever after, we have the model career woman who "does not need marriage" and works happily ever after. Gone are Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, and Davy Crockett, as we "bring sex-equity to our dreams of greatness" with prefab "new legends" about women sailors, baseball players, and suffragettes. Unlike the usual stories for juveniles celebrating the masculine-feminine polarity which has for centuries added tang and zest to our lives, this collection repudiates "the foolish business of dividing humanity into pinks and blues" with a story about "X," an androgynous child who grows up totally "fulfilled" by never being classified as boy or girl. While most juvenile literature helps the child find identity within the context of a social and historical heritage, these Polonius-like authors lecture the "free child" on the need to "be true to yourself" by resisting "other people's ideas of what a girl or boy is 'supposed' to be." A few selections—including one on handicapped children and one on the retarded—are sensitive and worthwhile, but most are merely echo chambers for the slogans of trendy feminism. These boring pieces command none of the imaginative power which informs *real* fairy tales, though they do share with certain fairyland witches the power to cast one spell: nothing could put a child to sleep faster. The end result is a caricature of both life and letters from which a child escapes to the trivial world of television—where at least people look as if they are divided into genders. (BC) □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

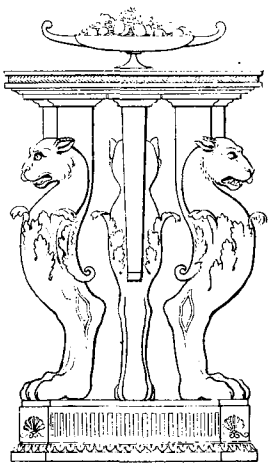
Semipseudo Cinema Verité and Benighted Viewers

William Rothman: *Hitchcock—The Murderous Gaze;* Harvard University Press; Cambridge, MA.

Donald Crafton: *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1898-1928;* The MIT Press; Cambridge, MA.

by Stephen Macaulay

In all areas of artistic endeavor there is typically a distinct, synthetic separation between practitioners who are considered artists and those who are considered entertainers. In contemporary letters, for example, there are two novelists, Tom Robbins and Thomas Pynchon, who are, seemingly, of approximately the same age and who have, apparently, some of the same interests. Pynchon, typically reticent with regard to public events, wrote a laser-bright blurb for Robbins's *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues,* a novel that only an ideological soul mate could love. Robbins, perhaps best known for his trendy *Another Roadside Attraction,* is generously considered an entertainer; one of the most notable things about him is the fact that he is almost as popular as Pac-Man on college campuses. Pynchon, of course, is an artist, a statement that can be made with little fear of contradiction, supported as it is by the National Book Award Seal of Good Practice printed on his *Gravity's Rainbow* (a novel only a devotee of modern literature can read). Post-Picasso artists are all but invisible on the mainstream scene, with the exception of those like Judy Chicago, who pole-vault themselves out of the pages of art journals and into *Time* and *Newsweek* by using a shtick of controversy (those artists are but fleeting, though: who remembers the name of the one who let gallery visitors take shots at him with a handgun?). To explain the difference between the perceptions of the practitioners by the audience there's often the resort to phrenology, wherein measure-



ments are made of the region above the eyes and below the locks and the resultant area used to account for an individual's tastes. What such computations don't sum, however, is the fact that in earlier ages the artificial distinction between artist and entertainer wasn't as obvious—and perhaps not as self-fulfilling—as evidenced by Shakespeare, Dickens, and others whom the rabble and cognoscenti both enjoyed and admired. Modern sophisticates, those who can be certain to secure a copy of the *New York Times* even if they reside in Ann Arbor, like to think that there is an exquisite qualitative difference between themselves and the provincial rustics who read, say, the *Ann Arbor News.* Thus the differentiation between Robbins and Pynchon, musicians Philip Glass and Frank Zappa, and so on. This line of thought says that a palate which enjoys pâté de foie gras cannot abide the mere aroma of a McDonald's hamburger.

The late Alfred Hitchcock is a cultural anomaly. His career as a filmmaker spanned from the mid-20's, when Pabst, Lang, and Eisenstein were making films, to the late 70's, which saw the emergence of Lucas, Scorsese, and Forman. More impressive—and important—than chronological longevity is the fact that Hitchcock made films that one's mother can find satisfyingly suspenseful and to which even despisers of the auteur theory bow. Leopold Tyrmand once told me that he had participated in an early screening of *Psycho* in Warsaw; the attendees were the cream of the Polish film industry—directors, writers,

In the Mail

***The Concentration Camp Conspiracy: A Second Pearl Harbor* by Lillian Baker; AFHA Publications; Lawndale, CA.** The author of *The Collector's Encyclopedia of Hatpins and Hatpin Holders* attempts to make the point that some Japanese-American claims stemming from World War II forced relocation are outlandish.

***The Constitutional Polity: Essays on the Founding Principles of American Politics* edited by Sidney A. Pearson, Jr.; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** Not only do the principles of the Founding Fathers get interpreted, but so too do the interpretations of commentators as diverse as William Howard Taft and Reinhold Niebuhr.

***Spirituality and Human Emotion* by Robert C. Roberts; Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.** For some, philosophy and Christianity are poles apart. We aren't among them. Nor is the author, as evidenced by his synthesis.

***Renascence* (Vol. XXXV, No. 2) edited by Joseph Schwartz; Marquette University Press; Milwaukee, WI.** A stately but not plump issue devoted to Dublin's almost-favorite son, marking his centenary. A worthy portrait.

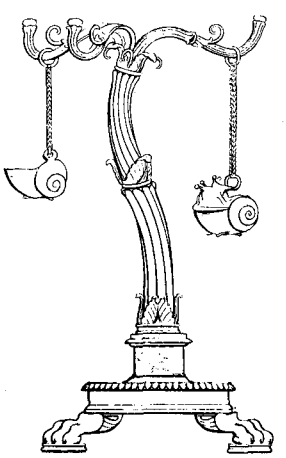
***Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality* by Robert Weisbrot; University of Illinois Press; Champaign, IL.** Although his surname may have been a fabrication, for many in the ghettos it couldn't have been closer to the truth. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

producers—a group that would be termed "highbrow" by phrenological partisans. According to Tyrmand, when the closing credits rolled on the screen, the reaction wasn't a mere jaded shrug indicating self-importance (i.e., "I've done the same things many times in *my* films"), but a standing ovation, honest admiration from a knowing group. They had been taken in by the magic on the screen; their sense of craft and technique gave way to wonderment. *Psycho,* of course, is a film that scholars argue about in journals and one that is repeatedly shown in midnight performances attended by teenagers, where it is received as a "cult" film. And so is *North by Northwest.* And *Dial M for Murder.* And *Vertigo.* Hitchcock transcended boundaries. In one sense, the master illusionist of the screen can be thought of like the drawings of the duck/rabbit and the vase/faces illustrated in elementary psychology texts: once advised of the existence of both in one, it is impossible to see one and not the other. Similarly, it is onerous to differentiate clearly between artist and entertainer in Hitchcock. Those who do invariably have an ax to grind.

William Rothman, in *Hitchcock—The Murderous Gaze,* tries to make a clear distinction, with the nod going to the artist. His text consists of his readings of five Hitchcock films: *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (1926); *Murder!* (1930); *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1935); *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943); and *Psycho* (1960). Rothman's readings are very close, illustrated with numerous frames from the films, bolstered with often-copious notes. It is very scholarly but smooth. The book is a handsome addition to any filmographical collection. However, a dichotomy emerges, one that tends to rend his arguments. Rothman is so enthusiastic about Hitchcock that he is, in addition to being a scholar, what can best be termed a "fan." Just as there are those who can explain the *real* meaning of, say, *The Lord of the Rings,* Rothman, implicitly throughout the studies in *Hitchcock,* explicitly in the Postscript ("I would not have written this book if I did not believe that I had penetrated some of the secret places of Hitchcock's art"), indicates that he, uniquely, has mastered the Master. Ambiguity is one of the touchstones of Hitchcock's films; certainty is suspect.

For example, Rothman has divined what he calls "Hitchcock's //// sign," which he says "recurs at significant junctures in every one of his films." Translated, the //// sign indicates the use of parallel vertical lines, such as the banister of the stairway in *The Lodger.* Explains Rothman, "At one level the //// serves as a Hitchcock signature . . . akin to his ritual cameo appearances. At another level, it signifies the confinement of the camera's subject within the frame and within the world of the film." By the time that Rothman reaches *Psycho,* //// becomes Hitchcock's "most cryptic, private symbol for the screen, the barrier that cannot be crossed yet is no real barrier at all." Rothman's vapors of enthusiasm have overtaken him and he sounds rather like a fervent member of a Browning Society. As even non-cineasts viewing Howard Hawks's *Scarface* (1932) have noticed, Hawks goes to great lengths to make an "X" on the screen to foreshadow the arrival of the protagonist (who has a similarly shaped scar on his cheek). It's often heavy-handed; the most subtle, perhaps, is the use of the Roman numeral on a hotel-room door. It is clearly a conscious device. Parallel vertical lines are a bit too ubiquitous in *any* scene (teeth, drapes, books on a shelf, telephone poles, etc.) to be a paradigm upon which to construct grand meanings bordering on the metaphysical.



One cinematic form that rarely gets its due—its highest critical accolade tends to be the application of the word *clever*—is animation. Animation is the weak sister of (what?) "nonillustrated" films. Generally, animated films, cartoons, are thought of as either something that fills in a movie program (i.e., padding between the coming attractions and the feature) or something that Walt Disney did well (Mickey Mouse, to many minds, is *the* most typical cartoon character). An Academy Award, of course, is presented for animation, and the process emerges in occasional feature films, particularly from the oleaginous pen of Ralph Bakshi (doped-up Aesopian fables, worked-over hobbits, drawn-out pop stars). Still, few pay more than fleeting attention to cartoons, which are judged fare only for preadolescents on Saturday mornings. While there has been a spate of comic-book-inspired films of late, such as the *Superman* saga, there is no real tie-in with animation. At times, such as now, cartoon creations—static, not dynamic ones—become popular with both the intelligentsia and the common reader: witness *Doonesbury.* However, the success of that strip was predicated on the message supplied, which could be interpreted only in terms of the items on the front page of the newspaper in which the strip appeared, to say nothing of other "insider" information, such as about so-called gonzo journalism and Hunter S. Thompson. But there is a tendency to be "above" enjoyment of animated cartoons, those living designs that exist in the outlandish world of the figurative. This snobbishness didn't always rule. Krazy Kat, a feisty creature with an anarchistic bent, which appeared both in print and on the screen, was adored by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

youngsters and by the more knowledgeable in the early decades of this century (the adoration of the latter group is evidenced in the work of Gilbert Seldes). Today, adults are too sophisticated for cartoons.

This has led to a bias in film studies, as noted by Donald Crafton, who says that his praiseworthy *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1898-1928* is "the first book to concentrate on the origins and early development of the animated film." Given the time span between the present and the starting point and the number of scribblers, scholarly and otherwise, turning out books about films, stars, special effects, and the like, the oversight is amazing, and can perhaps be explained only as the result of a perceived superiority of conventional over mere animated films: Woody Allen, yes; Woody Woodpecker, never!

Crafton's end point, 1928, is the accepted beginning of Mickey Mouse (thus the title). Crafton notes of the general audience: "Some people will no doubt be surprised to learn that there was any animation at all before Mickey." What emerges from his text is a sense of wonder—why Mickey? Winsor McCay's Gertie the dinosaur and Otto Messmer's Felix the cat are certainly more engaging than the pleasant mouse. Unfortunately, the others, unlike Disney, didn't keep up with emerging film technology, which in those days meant sound, so Mickey became king of the cartoons. (Felix, of course, reemerged with his bag of tricks, the Professor, Rock Bottom, and the rest, but he was a different feline.)

Something else becomes clear from Crafton's work: it's okay to enjoy cartoons; even those with advanced degrees and inflated self-opinions don't have to feel aberrant about it. If precedent must be cited to assuage feelings of doubt about the legitimacy of the acceptance of animated films in higher circles, then there are few better than that of Emile Cohl (1857-1938), one of the fathers—if not *the* father—of animation. Cohl has credentials to satisfy even the most exalted among sophisticated audiences. Early on, Cohl, a talented caricaturist, associated with a group of fellow bohemians in Paris. Like other art-oriented groups of the post-Franco-Prussian War era, this took a name: the Hydropathes. About them Crafton says, "Among their ranks were to be found many future leaders of the symbolist movement in theater and literature." No one feels squeamish about admiring the symbolists. Cohl was no tangential member; he edited and contributed (poems, reviews, and drawings) to the group's newsletter, *L'Hydropathe*. He started a weekly satirical journal in 1880, wrote two stage comedies, worked as a professional portrait photographer, and drew and painted. During the 1880's Cohl was involved with a group called the Incoherents, artists who, like the later surrealists, were concerned with the aesthetic aspects of insanity. André Breton and his breed can, of course, be discussed by those in the know. Cohl, in the 1890's, began illustrating a wide number of things—from song sheets to British humor magazines—and Crafton says that "at the turn of the century his name was far better known than that of Méliès." George Méliès (1861-1938), famed trick photographer, once out of favor, now has critical currency.

Cohl, at age 51, entered a film studio for the first time. In 1908 he started his work in cinema, writing scenarios, then moved on to making animated films—designing, animating, and photographing a great number with no assistance. From a technical standpoint, Cohl, according to Crafton, was the first to use matte photography, a technique that makes it possible to combine animated and live action (commonly used in *Star Wars* and the like today), and the first to use a camera with an electrically driven shutter. From an aesthetic viewpoint, Crafton's descriptions and the frame enlargements of Cohl's work that he supplies indicate quite forcefully that Cohl was more than a mere cartoonist. His *Le Peintre neó-impressionniste* (1910) shows a verbal and visual wit (e.g., a scene entitled "A cardinal eating lobster and tomatoes by the Red Sea" appropriately illustrated and tinted [this was a pre-color photography film]) on par with the work of, say, musician Erik Satie (e.g., "Three Pear-Shaped Pieces"), a man who worked during Cohl's lifetime. All of Cohl's work notwithstanding, the man was forgotten, even in his own time. Had he worked in a form like that of D. W. Griffith or King Vidor, there can be little doubt that he would have been —and would be—more well respected and honored, not dismissed as an animator, a second-class entertainer. Hopefully the efforts of Donald Crafton and other film scholars will result in justice being done to Cohl, McCay, Bray, Messmer, and the other talented artists who have been categorized out of view. □

STAGE

Tennessee Williams, RIP

Some call him the greatest American playwright ever. It's hyperbole, of course. He was post-Chekhovian practitioner of psychological naturalism, a kind of theater that—assuming it is well written—will always be praised as art. In American culture there is a dearth of this kind of serious and introspective playwrighting —hence, Mr. Williams's high standing in its hierarchy. He was an accomplished craftsman endowed with a fine ear for stage pace and the sound of dialogue. What he lacked was a gift for creating enduring characters that could transcend the spectacle and become edifying metaphors. His admirers called it a genius for portraying human idiosyncracies and vulnerabilities; more sober observers tended to see it as a limitation that confined him to exploring human puniness. One might say that his personages inspired at best pity, at worst disgust. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Madder Music

Something is happening in the arena of contemporary music which seems to indicate that it—in some cases, at least—is in a state of progressive ferment; others might simply define it as schizophrenia. Neil Young was once, not so many years ago, a Canadian folksinger. The themes and musical flavor (e.g., "Cowgirl in the Sand" and "The Emperor of Wyoming," respectively) were in the Western (i.e., cowboy, not civilization) tradition. He eventually moved to electrically powered music, but even then was producing albums with earthy titles like *After the Gold Rush* and *Harvest.* "Oh, Lonesome Me" campfire-style music continued, yet socially relevant lyrics (e.g., "I've seen the needle and the damage done") crept in and would do so until it seemed that Young would be consumed in a post-romantic nihilism ("It's better to burn out than to rust"). But he endured. Young has ridden his vector to the point where he, a once-acoustical musician, now runs some of his earlier pastoral music through a digital device so that he sounds like a *Star Wars* cantina creature on his most recent album, *Trans.* On the other hand there's Bruce Springsteen. The New Jersey native's early music isn't electronic; it is, well, Ashbury Park: horns, hard bass runs, solid whacks on the high-hat. It is city music. When Springsteen sings that he is "born to run," he doesn't mean in a pair of Nikes but on a Harley. But last year he sat in a room with a few instruments—guitars, harmonicas—and recording equipment and eventually emerged with *Nebraska,* which has more in common with Neil Young's early music than with Springsteen's own earlier efforts. (While *Nebraska* concentrates on the heartland, it also features a cut about Atlantic City that I suspect Louis Malle might consider adding to his film about that sad state, should it make another round.) Between the extremes of Young and Springsteen is Warren Zevon, who was recently on a tour that brought him through the Midwest.

Any boy growing up in America who has the urge to write poetry is branded a deviate. Boys are supposed to play baseball and similar games. Even playing with matches is more acceptable. Zevon is a talented songwriter. He didn't become one overnight. Zevon, who is far beyond those punk retardates who chain together inane grunts that are supposed to be meaningful and profound, is, given the acceptance of verse in this country, compelled to write topical lyrics to which some may object on the grounds of "aesthetics." Those people fail to acknowledge that well-written song lyrics are a form of poetry and that poetry isn't necessarily limited to musing on the ineffable (vide Swift's "Cassinus and Peter"). Zevon's most recent recording, *The Envoy,* for example, includes pieces on modern diplomacy; the death of not a "pusher" but a salesman of "pharmaceuticals" (note: cocaine and other so-called "recreational" drugs, as evidenced by the frothy media handling of the arrest of John DeLorean, are achieving a "clean" status in ever-widening circles; heroin is still considered "dirty," and so must be forced upon a first-time user: pushed); and the necrophilia associated with Elvis Presley. It's not pretty, but neither are the war in Lebanon, illegal narcotics, nor semi-religious faith in a pyrite idol.

The American lyrical tradition in the 20th century has two poles. One wrings variations from "the moon in June"; when it tries to get dourly emotional it goes as far as to lilt, "raindrops keep falling on my head." The other, when upbeat, tells of the "backdoor man" ("the men don't know, but the little girls understand"); when it is down, down looks like it is up. Zevon is a partisan of the latter. Although he can't be defined as a blues singer, he does have similarities with those who do shout the blues, both in content and style. That is, Zevon doesn't have a voice that is music to the ears of either middle-of-the-road or chain-and-leather-clad-mongrel lovers. Zevon sounds as if his rites of passage included drinking a can of burning Sterno: his voice is deep, raw, raspy. Perhaps because of that, Zevon makes extensive use of backup musicians on his recordings. Indeed, on his *Bad Luck Streak in Dancing School* he employs strings to provide bridges (the individual songs aren't pretty, though: the title track is about Zevon's struggle with alcoholism). In essence, Zevon is like Neil Young at midpoint or pre-*Nebraska* Bruce Springsteen. However, on his 1983 tour Zevon appeared with six- and twelve-string guitars, harmonica, and a grand piano. There were no southern California session men to smooth the edges; the stage presentation was unprocessed. While the signs seem to have conflicting messages (e.g., Young points to technology; Springsteen and Zevon are reconsidering Orpheus), one thing is clear: there is a still-amorphous but vaguely definable change occurring in contemporary American music that may mark a temporary end to its current baleful condition. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Boil

We do not know what motivates—or, less still, what necessitates—the existence of a muckraker journalist like Jack Anderson in this republic. The longer we observe this circumstance, the more we're inclined to conclude that both the inscrutability of the Lord's decision and teleology itself have mixed something up. However, not all faith in Supreme verdicts should be lost: neither do we know why we should be afflicted with disgusting pimples, but there must be a rational explanation even for that: the excretion of foul processes in our metabolism must be exposed so they can be taken care of and cured. The problem with Anderson, however, is that although his life's function seems to be that of an abscess on society's skin, squeezing him out or burning him away with Lidex is impossible. And while blackheads do not generally impair the body's health or well-being, the constant feeling of uncleanness after a chance reading of Anderson's column somehow affects the sensibilities of a normal American. Even zits that are neglected too long can eventually infect one's blood.

Anderson plies a trade: with a depressingly shallow mind, he sells information about and opinions on complex problems to minds even more shallow than his. It is a despicable but arch-American occupation, one that is deeply embedded in our worst sociocultural traditions. Those traditions, more alive today than ever, constantly lower the level of popular consciousness; they prevent the evolution of saner social instincts in the nation and make us the laughingstock of other nations. This phenomenon is often called the price we pay for having our press free.

Many in America consider Anderson a cheap, sleazy prevaricator; others see him as a mendacious slob whose argument is so wanting, simplistic, and untidy that it hardly deserves attention, much less outrage. A sample of the Anderson style was recently on display in *Parade*, a gossip weekly of typically Andersonian nature. There we could read:

> To write this article, of course, I had to penetrate the tightly guarded decision-making process. I am in touch with the professionals. I regularly read their secret assessments.

A brief analysis of these sentences, apart from the lowbrow, bragging tone, makes an intelligent reader assume that in order to "penetrate" the governmental "decision-making process," Anderson had to do some bribing or stealing. If he really did, we assume he should be in jail; if he really did and still enjoys freedom, we're in worse shape as a law-abiding society than we thought. However, another possibility—that the "professionals" simply use Anderson for their time-honored infighting—makes Anderson's hubristic self-advertisement idiotic. But let's look at a different sentence in the same piece in which he claims to dispense a revelation:

> In fact, on Sept. 30, 1980, I quoted a top-secret Pentagon report warning that Iraq could become the first Arab nuclear power with 'a potential for threatening Israel.'

"Top-secret"? Since 1975 (after the first Iraqi-French contract for nuclear technology), even the schoolchildren in Tel Aviv knew that the Iraquis were constructing a "potential" for the nuclear annihilation of Israel, while every child in the Arab schools of Baghdad, Damascus, Amman, and Riyadh was taught to wait patiently for that moment and be ready for a supreme celebration.

Recently, Anderson viciously attacked the U.S. Information Agency for dispensing funds, grants, and fellowships impartially, on a bi-ideological basis, not discriminating against either liberals or conservatives. This evenhandedness is a bit of a novelty in governmental practice: over the last 30 years a conservative, or just nonliberal, intellectual or scholar could expect to be included in a government-sponsored program around the time when roses grew on the banks of Love Canal. The Reagan Administration displayed its intention to restore at least a semblance of balance, and that was enough for the liberal establishment to unleash Anderson, who always serves the strong, the wealthy, the influential—all his "waywardness" notwithstanding. (In this instance, he acted in unison with one Christopher Hitchens, a pinko-punk English import, the Washington, D.C. correspondent for *The Nation*, the organ of the American radical-millionaire left.) The USIA issued a response to Anderson and Hitchens, and it pinpointed lies as lies.

Yet, to our mind, that response is not enough. In the USIA case, Anderson has clearly and unequivocally demonstrated a paranoid hatred of pluralism, democracy, equitableness, lack of prejudice, nonpartisanship—all allegedly liberal virtues. Properly handled, his case could be shown to be the epitome of some of the most aggravating sores and lesions of our contemporary culture. We can hardly expect the media to mete out justice or tell it like it really is: after all, Anderson is one of their own, and they will defend him if only through their silence. But the Reagan Administration? Bah! If our current administration knew how to confront a muckraker's bile and cleanse our social body from sociomoral pustules by making truthful exactitudes known on a large scale, we all would be better off. □

Schlock Fair

We do not like the house of Condé Nast. The easiest way to characterize this dislike would be to say that some ill-fated things have happened to the heritage left by Mr. Nast—a magazine entrepreneur who conceived a so-called "class" publication—and that he himself, in all likelihood, would disapprove of the current cultural fragrance of his brainchildren, *Vogue* and *Mademoiselle* magazines, as well as how the recently resuscitated *Vanity Fair* monthly promises to look and smell. We do not believe

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in this kind of pseudointrospection into the contrived minds of movers and shakers who happen to have passed away, but we do think that any empire builder with a firm philosophical principle should know how to defend his life's oeuvre from what he might have perceived as perversion. Anyway, what happened to Mr. Nast's legacy in allegedly "classy" American journalism is obvious: *Vogue* has become one of the destroyers of rational standards that undergird any discipline of manners and the chief dispenser of moral atrophy and cultural vandalism presented as new "values." Nothing can transform its jaded, hedonistic nihilism into humanistic progressiveness—not even the obscenely expensive accessories of the good life that it stridently advertises. The stench of pseudohumanitarian forbearance for *any* kind of behavioral overindulgence emanates from *Vogue's* pages, all its French perfume ads notwithstanding.

The resurgence of *Vanity Fair* engineered by Condé Nast is a tour de force of imitativeness at its worst, an exercise in emulative conformism, pure and simple. The attempt to equal the kinetic presence of its predecessor on the American cultural scene is doomed in advance: the former *VF* was moved not so much by ideas as by creative personalities who masterfully toyed with fresh trends. The present *VF* begins with proposing replacements: one John Leonard for T. S. Eliot, Vidal for Aldous Huxley, one Nora Ephron for Dorothy Parker, Warhol for Matisse—the whole notion is a farcical proposition, tantamount to substituting plastic K-Mart renditions of Mickey Mouse or E.T. for the brains and faces of a Proustian literary salon. Nowhere is this more visible than in the inaugural issue: it features a display of pictures by a radical-chic "artist" photographer, one Richard Avedon, an alleged fill-in for Edward Steichen. Mr. Avedon offers a gallery of portraits of American miners as melancholic aborigines professionally processed for the social conscience and quasi-ideological outrages that best flourish at a dinner in Manhattan's Lutèce.

Thus, the one item worthy of attention in the first issue is the prose of Gabriel García Màrquez, a strong, gifted storyteller, but one who seems to be in perennial pursuit of an opening sentence—his trademark—and of the irretrievably lost narrative and stylistic magic which infused his best-known novel. In the end, the only classy thing about the new *VF* is its printing technique and luxurious paper—a weird substance that, regardless of its costliness, easily turns into trash when it is covered with trashy messages, worthless modishness, and picayune symbols. □

Liars

George Orwell was a great writer with a passion for seeing the truth clearly and expressing it compellingly. The left-wing *Village Voice* decided to celebrate the approaching year by devoting an issue to *1984,* Orwell's title that became an idiom. But their way of celebrating is to obfuscate, distort, and deny the truth. In an article purporting to explain how 1948 laid the foundations for a 1984 reality supposedly very like that which Orwell envisioned, two *V.V.* agitprop hacks thus rewrite the year in question:

> By the end of the year cold-war liberalism and anti-Communist hysteria were rampant. The United States, acting on the Truman Doctrine first promulgated a year earlier, was financing counterrevolution in Greece. The Marshall Plan, creating a $20 billion market in Europe for U.S. manufactures and foodstuffs, was proffered with the quid pro quo of political loyalty to the U.S. . . . Mao's forces fought their way across China, and the great reactionary fantasy of a "lost" China, matching a "lost" eastern Europe and fears of a "lost" western Europe, was born.

The facts are different. The Soviet Union fielded an army of terrorist revolutionaries in Greece in an open and unprovoked violation of the Yalta Accord. The Soviet Union imposed its rule over Eastern Europe through methods and ruthlessness that made Hitler look like an inept schoolboy. The Marshall Plan saved Western Europe from starvation and laid the foundation for its prosperity so it could receive, over three decades, millions of refugees from the Soviet hell. A passing glimpse at their "work" makes it clear that the *Village Voice* homegrown Bolsheviks are liars. His entire life, Orwell fought the sleaze oozing from organs like *V.V.* He gave the biggest symbolic black eye to Big Brother on this side of the world. He was less successful with the multitude of midget brothers who still creep around many of the editorial offices in Manhattan. □

Unequal Logic

In the *New York Review of Books,* a highbrow publication, a recent article on "Why Liberals Should Believe in Equality" by Ronald Dworkin shows that a bit of lowbrow indulgence in special pleading and non sequitur is quite acceptable when certain prejudices are at stake. In setting forth "the main principles of liberalism based on equality," Mr. Dworkin's argumentation, such as it is, repeatedly reveals that these main principles are based on an unacknowledged and inconsistent commitment to inequality. From the proffered perspective of egalitarianism, government is in error whenever it deprives any citizen of "his sense of equal worth," though naturally every effort, public and private, must be expended to deny both the sense and the worth of citizens who do not share this view. For, as Dworkin intones, liberals are duty-bound:

> to oppose the moralism of the New Right, because no self-respecting person who believes that a particular way to live is most valuable for him can accept that this way of life is base or degrading.

Still, in the brave new world of Mr. Dworkin, we must not suppose that all "self-respecting persons" are created

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

genuinely *equal:* self-respecting atheists, self-respecting homosexuals, and other relativists with self-regard are exceptionally beautiful creatures whose public aims must be vouchsafed by the tender compassion of the same crusaders who are zealously driving self-respecting religionists, traditionalists, and other conservative dragons from Camelot's public square. Moral Majority must never be allowed to "enforce private morality" upon even the most lascivious elements of the body politic, but advocates of welfare-state economics must have the statutory power to make their distributionist morality compulsory for all capitalists. The self-respect of feminists and integrationists must be bolstered by affirmative-action programs, while the self-esteem of meritist employers is degraded with the discarding of sex- and race-blind standards. Dworkin does admit that "any practical program" for implementing his vision "will work imperfectly and will inevitably involve speculation, compromise, and arbitrary lines in the face of ignorance." But then for him and for his liberal editors and readers, these lines of arbitrariness will comfortably circumscribe their fragile self-respect, while the face of ignorance radiates a smile of distinctive approval. □

The American Proscenium

El Salvador

We wish to state briefly where we stand on an issue that to our mind is currently dominating—and will continue to dominate—the debate on good and evil, as well as other eschatological dilemmas in American foreign policy. As everybody knows, there's a war going on in El Salvador; that war, it seems to us, is being misrepresented in the American press—the effects of that distortion on our future as a free society could be disastrous. Once again reason, experience, and common sense are all being drowned in an overpowering din of incoherent voices touted by our media as valid, responsible, authoritative opinions. Both fact and circumstance are being brutally deformed by liberal and leftist newsmen, commentators, and guerrilla supporters; thus the extrapolated analysis, assessment, and interpretation of the situation threatens to make, once again, lies and stupidity the guiding forces behind our political decisions. Let's therefore focus on some pernicious clichés which, with ever-increasing efficiency, the media have begun to circulate as unassailable certitudes, and which may lead us into grievous misfortunes.

—El Salvador is another Vietnam. It is and it isn't. Our lack of fortitude in solving the El Salvador conflict in the best interests of both political realism and the democratic sense of justice *could* result in the geopolitical quagmire that afflicted us after the termination of our Indochina involvement. Unfortunately, the domino theory does not always work according to the schedules worked out by strategists in liberal editorial offices. Thailand did not fall to the communists —but a large chunk of Africa and western Asia did. The Afghanistan takeover would have been impossible had we not folded up our tents in Vietnam and gone home. The Kremlin planners have plenty of time. It will take a decade to see what effect our actions (or inaction) really had in Indochina. What makes El Salvador a more terrifying domino chip is, of course, geography. However, the enraged pacifists in Oregon and Maine prefer to ignore the iron rules of the map.

—It makes little difference to the U.S. if such a small country falls. Gathering the scalps of small countries is the communists' global strategy. Why should they wage big, costly, unpredictable wars if small ones will do the job? There's a subtle and victorious rationale in this approach: every tiny country's demise that is brought about by the most insidious and cruel means immediately becomes a precious propaganda triumph. Both the Soviets and domestic anti-American groups easily transform every such fall into an irrefutable rejection of our country, our social system, our democracy, and ourselves by some mythical "people"; that rejection is presented as proof of our decay, impotence, and ineptness, which is rooted in our wickedness, in who and what we are. To the liberals in Vermont or Wisconsin, the fate of Angola or Mozambique may mean nothing. To all of us, and to the idea of American democracy as something better than Soviet totalitarianism, it means a lot.

—If the people of El Salvador want communism, we must bow to the will of the people. Such sentiment is often voiced by the extraordinary intellects that are nourished by the mental fertilizers of a New York or Los Angeles cocktail party. The fact is that communism has never, anywhere on earth, come to power as an expression of the people's will; wherever it exists it has been installed through the revolutionary struggle of ruthless, ferocious, utterly anti-democratic political militants who, without any verifiable evidence, *claim* to represent the people. This reality does not impair the "pro-people" élan of the liberal jet set. Communism appropriates the mission of representing people *without* a mandate; even a brief reading of Lenin dispels any doubt that a communist government was—or could ever be—elected. The liberal correspondents keep talking about "the people's will" before a revolutionary takeover, and as soon as it occurs, they discover that the majority of the people are *against* the new rulers. But by then the damage has been done, and no one at the *Times* or the *Post* or Foggy Bottom knows what to do next. Not long ago, a senator announced that until recently he had been for "some" intervention in El Salvador's affairs, and now he is "against." But he did not elaborate on what should be done next, thereby becoming just another moral and intellectual surrender in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

endless series of our surrenders. Does he realize that by his recommendation of doing nothing he is confirming that we are iniquitous, depraved imperialists, exactly what the Salvadoran guerrillas accuse us of being? Does it escape his attention that he has, in effect, declared our ideological principles and our political system inferior to the Soviet ones, for which *they* are obviously willing to fight? By not confronting the guerrillas, we confirm their allegation that the Salvadoran people have rejected us and chosen communism and the *guerrilleros'* rationale and program instead—which is an egregious lie, at least in light of what we saw on our TV screens during the 1982 Salvadoran elections. But many in America have been taken in by this perversity, and thus have become unwitting associates in the honorable coalition encompassing Andropov, Castro, *The Nation* (a "venerable" American publication), the Institute for Policy Studies (an "independent" think tank), and the World Council of Churches (a "religious" institution that fights "injustice" anywhere except in Siberia).

—They fight for true democracy. "They" stands for the Salvadoran leftist butchers; "true" is the code word for communist oppression (as a Polish writer once remarked, where there is "true democracy" there is no democracy). "They" fought for democracy in Cuba and Nicaragua—by now even *Time* and *Newsweek* and CBS are stupefied and have begun, timidly, to ask: "Where is democracy in either country?" In Nicaragua, according to a recent escapee whose story appeared not long ago in the *Chicago Tribune:*

> 'There were political arrests [under Somoza], but never life-threatening. Now the arrests are frequent, and the bodies of the prisoners are often found on deserted roads. Ironically, the Sandinistas have officially rejected capital punishment.'

—The struggle in El Salvador has nothing to do with the Soviet Union: it is between the starving masses and the fascist assassins financed by landowning exploiters. That may be the vilest lie of them all, although in our press the half-innocent term "disinformation" is preferred. The money and weapons come from Cuba. Thus, only if we forget that Cuba wouldn't have survived a day without Soviet money and weapons can we keep the Politbureau out of it. The hard-core military training of the Salvadoran communist troops is provided by Cuba, the PLO, Libya, Syria, Vietnam, North Korea; the technical assistance comes from Czechoslovakia and East Germany. As we all know, those countries and governments are fully independent from any Soviet money, armaments, or supervisors. So, of course, are Jaruzelski, Babrak Karmal, and the Bulgarian terrorist network, not to mention Idi Amin, the Red Brigades, and the Baader-Meinhof gang. There are still people in America who believe that the Soviet Union had nothing to do with the Vietnam War. And here is where we come full circle and can agree with some, whose meaning is different from ours, saying that El Salvador is another Vietnam. Yes, it is, and we'd better remember it.

So let us ask the same question Lenin did in 1902—"What is to be done?" We must, however, add to that: "What *should* be done?"

We are not foreign-policy conceptualists. We are not experts on how to project power into international developments. We would not be so cheeky as to advise our bipartisan diplomatic pundits, or our nonideological but omniscient civil servants, or the pragmatic strategists of our invincible armed forces, or our cool, self-confident global-policy theoreticians. We feel even less able to convince the subliminal Kremlin-lovers and America-haters of our intellectual elites about our premonitions. But we *do* know something about this century. We *do* have a sense of what our epoch is about. We *do* know how our time has debased itself by accepting the most brain-damaging cant as information. And we *do* know how formidable a weapon in the struggle for the world the communist perversion of truth can become—we learned it from Orwell, Camus, and Koestler. We've read Dostoevski, Conrad, Kafka, and Solzhenitsyn, thus we know that ideological evil *does* objectively exist and is nested exactly where numbed minds misperceive justice and integrity. Finally, we know that communism has brought up an entire generation of janissaries, that is, highly trained mercenaries of hatefulness and rabidity who serve the Soviet Union anywhere on this planet—they are called young, noble idealists in American universities and literary salons. Right now, they are doing their number in El Salvador as *campesinos*. Nothing short of armed resistance by equally prepared and motivated defenders of the democratic civilization can defeat Soviet totalitarianism, wherever it starts its mini-wars, and the West may well perish if it refuses to recognize this reality.

We also suspect that there *are* means to cut off the supply of weapons, instructors, and volunteers to the Salvadoran "revolution" other than waging war outright. This would require the resolve to use our Navy and Air Force without paying too much attention to territorial waters and air space. After all, we are—allegedly—a superpower, and we'd only be in our own neighborhood, very close to our own backyard.

Arthur Koestler, RIP

Darkness at Noon, Arthur Koestler's paramount accomplishment, certainly must be listed among those novels which have had an impact on history. According to an apocryphal report, Joseph Stalin was once asked which he would have preferred: that China had *not* been conquered by communists or that *Darkness at Noon* had never been published? As the tale goes, he said: "I wouldn't pass a too-hasty judgment." Just the existence of such an anecdote proves that Koestler was able to translate his disenchantment with communism into a work of rarely witnessed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intellectual power. One of the finest samples of a dialectical novel transcending the very notion of fiction—a 20th-century specific genre—*Darkness at Noon* will long remain a most precise indictment of communism's moral failure. For that, any thoughtful person in our age owes Arthur Koestler respect and admiration. We are certain that his death will not erase his presence among us for a long time to come.

An Epitaph to Rabidity

A venerable gentleman died not long ago at the age of 83. He was one of the most advertised, maligned, and abused hate objects of the American liberal universe. His name was Robert Ten Broeck Stevens, president of the J. P. Stevens textile company, whose valiant fight against unionist crime, abuse, and hypocrisy frequently made headlines in the media. His cardinal sins and unpardonable wickedness were endlessly illuminated on the giant expanse of the progressive press, from the *Times*, CBS, and the *Post* to *Mother Jones* and *Village Voice*.

What was never mentioned was that Mr. Stevens, while serving as Secretary of the Army in 1954, was deeply involved in the fight against Senator McCarthy, and was instrumental in bringing about the latter's final defeat. According to the liberal gospel, one cannot possibly be antiunion *and* a servant of democracy and truth. There's no such thing as independent integrity.

Copycats

We suspect that whatever has happened to the world during the last century has been and continues to be predetermined and predicated somewhere between New Jersey and Oregon. This is, of course, a sweeping generalization, but one that can be dissected with the precise insights of philosophy, sociology, and the history of manners—all of which prove its puzzling accuracy.

Therefore, what happened in March in West Germany—called one of the most important elections of the post-World War II period only confirmed our suspicions. The Greens, a sort of artifact (homunculus?) of a political party, brought into the German political process something that is weird by the criteria of European parliamentary tradition, but which is not unknown in America.

The Greens are not exactly a party, having no *sensu stricto* political program anchored in a given set of ideological principles which, in turn, are rooted in a philosophy or a world view. They are dedicated to a political defense of emotions, penchants, sympathies, preferences—particularly to the defense of nature against the encroachment of the enterprising human mind and human socioeconomic activities. Love of and devotion to nature is certainly nothing new; for millennia it has been a valuable source of poetry and personal raptures. However, a few decades ago in America, such feelings acquired a special coloring that in due course prescribed a commitment to militancy on behalf of some strictly defined sociopolitical posture. The hitherto innocent and benign groupings of bird-watchers and pine-forest fans suddenly emerged as a highly charged political force that eagerly, even fanatically, began to march for every leftist cause, brutally trampling any cogent argument that contested its allegedly sacred crusade. Since that development, any political stance announcing a fight against the American way of life—from zany anarchism to rigidly organized revolutionary movements to shrewd Kremlin proxies on American campuses—has been able to count on the ferocious support of perpetually enraged snail-darter worshipers and dormant-volcano lovers. During the infamous 1960's, the American ecological movement fiercely sided with the made-in-Berkeley fascism; it subscribed to the tenet that all the ills and indignities of existence are nested in the American political and economic system. Some environmentalists go so far as to claim that the American democracy maneuvers us all, willingly or unwillingly, into hastening the extinction of life on this planet. Consequently, their mission is to stave off that catastrophe by joining forces with the most unbending, relentless enemies of America's "depravity" (guaranteed by the Constitution), all of whom are on the left, each of whose end goal is to destroy American democracy and replace it with some quasi-Marxian, Soviet-like, vaguely envisioned sociopolitical structure giving all decisions concerning rocks, plants, and natural resources to the fanatical idolators of a landscape unspoiled by a smokestack.

The Greens, which in the March election won a small representation in the *Bundestag* (German parliament), supply precisely the same ideological scheme coupled with fierce, rabid anti-Americanism. Their political pronunciamentos identify America as mankind's current curse and evil. From the perspective of their fight against atomic energy and nuclear-defense systems—which is waged by the German middle- and upper-class youth, their main constituency—they seem not to realize that they have become an objective tool of the Kremlin's policy in Europe. They seem to have ignobly forgotten that they owe their freedom and affluence to the Marshall Plan, to America's political magnanimity after their World War II debacle. Yet what's truly grotesque is that they seem not to notice that, actually, they are a sort of American product. In spite of some bemuddled, romantic *echt* German ingredients in their rhetoric and image, they are American merchandise, complete with the blue-jeans-cum-T-shirt uniform, mentally equipped with virtues and standards cranked out in the ideological sweatshops of Greenwich Village or manufactured by the conscience factories in California and New Mexico. As such, their political durability and seriousness is a matter of news stories and reportage, not one necessitating study. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"*Persuasion At Work* . . . tells how we might work more effectively to counter the spoilers of the American system."

Persuasion at Work

Religion, the State, and the Schools: Reflections on a Long and Bitter Controversy

—*Ed Feulner*
President, The Heritage Foundation
from a nationally syndicated column

"I'm impressed with the arguments marshalled by a newsletter called *Persuasion At Work.*"

—*Rance Crane*
Editor-in-chief,
Crane's Chicago Business

Persuasion At Work is a newsletter specifically designed to keep the businessman apprised of the important developments in the opinion-making contest. Each month we offer an analysis of a publication, an organization or a movement pushing public attitudes one way or the other on an issue of importance to the business community.

These commentaries are drawn from direct sources including attendance at the meetings of activist groups, study of their promotional literature and monitoring of their periodicals.

In this era when "corporate responsibility" has become a bludgeon used by activist groups to force corporations to meet their demands, a new level of understanding is needed by the businessman to hold his own in a kind of contest for which he has had little preparation.

Persuasion At Work is a sentinel resource to help guard a poorly protected flank.

Subscribe to *Persuasion At Work*

☐ Please send me a one-year subscription to *Persuasion At Work* (12 issues) for $10.00.

SEND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:
Persuasion At Work
The Rockford Institute
934 North Main Street
Rockford, IL 61103

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rockford Institute
934 North Main Street
Rockford, Illinois 61103

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED